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TWELVE DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED CHIEFLY AT

THE MEETING-HOUSE

OF THE PEOPLE CALLED

QUAKERS,

IN THE PARK,

Southwark,

BY THE LATE

THOMAS LETCHWORTH.

LONDON:

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M.DCC.LXXXVII.

PREFACE.

THESE Diſcourſes were taken in ſhort-hand at the time of delivery, by a perſon not in the ſame religious community with the preacher. A few neceſſary corrections of grammatical inaccuracies have been ſince made ; and, in ſome inſtances, a more complete citation of the texts adduced. In quotations made from memory, it muſt frequently happen that the words are not quite exact. It ſuf-

ficiently anſwered the ſpeaker's purpoſe if the general import of the paſſage was conveyed, and expreſſions, which thus qualify the citation, are frequently introduced, and always to be implied.

It is well known that the miniſters of the religious ſociety, with whom the author of theſe Diſcourſes profeſſed, diſclaim all previous ſtudy in the compoſition of their extemporaneous ſermons. It cannot, therefore, be expected that they ſhould be exact in methodical arrangement, or abound in the embelliſhments of modern eloquence. What was not attempted it is no diſgrace not to have attained. It may, however, perhaps, juſtly be a matter of doubt whether that zeal and energy of delivery, which ariſe from the feelings of the moment, may not, in their effects on the audience, more than counterbalance the cool correctneſs of ſtudied oratory. The Quakers lay down few dogmas, and ſeldom enlarge on thoſe myſterious points of theology which have ſo much divided the Chriſtian world, and have

have moſtly occaſioned contention in proportion to their obſcurity. The doctrine of univerſal grace, of which a manifeſtation, or portion, is given to every man, and by obedience to which he is enabled to fulfil his duty, and to walk acceptably with his Creator, is the leading principle of that ſociety, who hold, as the neceſſary reſult of it, that true worſhip conſiſts in a humble proſtration of heart and communion of ſpirit with the Father of mercies, and is therefore perfectly conſiſtent with a ſtate of ſilence. Theſe points are inculcated in the following pages, perhaps, to a degree of tautology, for which an extract from one of the Diſcourſes, in the preacher's own words, may furniſh the beſt excuſe.

" Though it is probable that what I " have ſometimes delivered may have been " more or leſs ſimilar to that which I have " aforetime delivered, yet I hope that even " a repetition of doctrines and advices, " which we are urged to deliver from a " ſenſe of duty, may not be as water ſpilt

" upon a ſtone, but may have a tendency " (if not to convey any material informa- " tion to the underſtanding) to ſtir up at " leaſt the pure mind by way of remem- " brance."

The love of fame, taken as a general principle, and including the deſire of being eſteemed and approved by one's friends, frequently mingles itſelf with our beſt motives. But, though this paſſion may, in a public preacher, receive ſome gratification from the ſilent and ſolemn attention of the hearers, it would ſcarcely excite a prudent man to expect any increaſe of reputation from the publication of Diſcourſes, of which the ſubject and arrangement were not pre-conceived, and the expreſſions ſuch as were ſuggeſted at the inſtant. In the preſent inſtance, at leaſt, no imputation of this ſort can ariſe to the author of theſe Diſcourſes, who is removed from the ſcene, and the influence of all earthly paſſions. The apology for the preſent publication reſts on the hope that impreſſions of a ſalu-

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tary nature may, by this means, be renewed on ſuch minds as are ſincerely deſirous of fulfilling the duties of their ſtation, and of reaching the haven of eternal reſt.

A friend of the author has favoured us with the following brief account of him.

Thomas Letchworth was born at Woodbridge, in the county of Suffolk, in the year 1739. His parents were of the people called Quakers, and his father, a tradeſman in that town, was a preacher among them. In that religious ſociety, the earnings of honeſt induſtry are thought to be a mode of maintenance more conſiſtent with the evangelical qualifications required in a Chriſtian miniſter, and with the influence he ought to poſſeſs in his congregation, than legal ſtipends or gratuitous contributions, which too frequently occaſion contention in the one inſtance, or dependence in the other. He received from his father, who had a numerous family, the common education of a boarding-ſchool at Hartford, and was afterwards put apprentice to

a linen-draper at Epping. In the early part of his life, he was of a conſumptive habit; and this imperfect ſtate of his health probably conſpired with a diſpoſition, naturally reflective and ſerious, to impreſs on his mind a ſtrong ſenſe of the vanity of human deſires, and the importance of religious duty. Before he was twenty years of age, he began his miniſterial ſervices, in which he was particularly deſirous to inculcate on the minds of young people a frequent conſideration of their latter end, and of the awful concerns of futurity. His Diſcourſes were copious, animated, and pathetic; but, perhaps, not altogether free from a certain inflation of language, to which men of fervid imaginations, in expreſſing their firſt conceptions, are frequently ſubject. His ſervices were, however, moſtly acceptable, and he ſpent a conſiderable portion of his time in viſiting different parts of the country on a religious account. At this period, he kept a ſhop in Criſpin-ſtreet, Spital-fields, whence he removed to Ampthill,

Ampthill, in Bedfordſhire, but afterwards returned to London, in which city, or its vicinity, he continued to reſide till near his deceaſe.

He was not much converſant in the learned languages, but his reading in his native tongue was pretty extenſive. Hiſtory, natural philoſophy, the rudiments of medicine and anatomy, the leading principles of aſtronomy, and even the charms of poetry, furniſhed him with matter of meditation and amuſement in his leiſure hours. But his favourite ſtudy was the myſterious operations of the human mind, the paſſions which actuate it, the nature of its union with the body, the reaſonable hope of its immortality, the principles of identity, liberty, neceſſity, and all thoſe branches which conſtitute the ſublime but obſcure ſcience of metaphyſics. He was well verſed in moſt of the writers on theſe ſubjects, nor did the different opinions of religious ſects, both in his own and in former periods of hiſtory, eſcape his cloſe examination. The *dernier reſult* of his enquiries

quiries may be learned from the following paper, found among his manuſcripts with that very title; and it were to be wiſhed that every inquiry and controverſy concerning ſuch ſubjects might terminate in the ſame humble and liberal manner.

" From an honeſt intention of acting " conſiſtently with the relation I bear to " God, my Maker, and to my fellow-crea- " tures, I have carefully reviewed moſt of " the religious ſentiments, on thoſe ſubjects, " held by any ſociety of men in the known " world. I have put a period to my re- " ſearches into the books and opinions of " men, and have concluded to reſign my- " ſelf in future to the guidance of thoſe " ſenſations which I feel to increaſe my " love to God and to mankind, and to pur- " ſue ſuch meaſures of conduct in religion " and morality, the proſecution of which " gives me the moſt peace; and to judge no " man, neither pretend to exalt my opinions " and practices to judge of the rectitude of o- " ther mens by. Let others do as they " will,

" will, as for me I will endeavour to ſeek
" peace, and enſue it. A man cannot be
" happy, whatever notions, or opinions,
" he may hold, or whatever meaſures of
" conduct he may purſue, unleſs, in the
" holding of ſuch opinions, and in being
" found in the proſecution of ſuch mea-
" ſures, he feels himſelf eaſy and comfort-
" ed at heart. Let this rule of my future
" conduct be termed erroneous, defective,
" an illuſion, or what not — it is the beſt
" rule of my faith and manners which I
" have been able to find after a cloſe enqui-
" ry of fifteen years. *Glory to God in the*
" *higheſt, on earth peace, and good-will to*
" *men*, is, and I hope ever will be, the lan-
" guage of my ſoul. Amen."

At what time this ſummary of his reſearches was written does not appear; probably ſome years before his deceaſe. The following extracts from three letters, written to a friend during his laſt illneſs, the two latter a ſhort time before his death, will ſhew that theſe ſentiments retained their impreſ-

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ſion to the laſt: they will ſhew that he poſſeſſed what, in ſuch moments, it is better to poſſeſs than the treaſures of the rich or the knowledge of the learned, a ſpirit of reſignation and peace, and a humble but earneſt hope in the mercies of the Almighty.

" *Fourteenth of the twelfth month*, 1783. I " am now better than when thou lefteſt me. " My little bark ſprang a leak ſome months " ago, which gradually gained on the pump " until every effort to ſave her ſeemed to be " made in vain, and deſtruction ſeemed in- " evitable. The moment was awful, but " not fearful. I felt an entire reſignation " to the appointment of our heavenly Fa- " ther. I have not to tell of being lifted " up to extacy in viſions, nor of my fears " having been alarmed by any terrific " dreams. To God, my Maker, I looked " ſingly. My dependence was fixed on " him alone. A ſober humbling ſenſe of " his preſence and providence prevented " fear, and inſpired hope."

" *Eleventh*

" *Eleventh of the ninth month*, 1784. I " find myſelf ſtill loſing fleſh, and rather " weaker, but, in ſome other reſpects, ra- " ther better. I know not what to think. " Here I am.

" Safe in the hands of one diſpoſing Power,
" Or in the natal, or the mortal, hour,"

" enjoying every gleam of ſunſhine to " the utmoſt, and bearing, with as much " patience and reſignation as poſſible, the " cloudy days and ſtarleſs nights ſome- " times allotted me under the preſent diſ- " penſation."

" *Twenty-eighth of the tenth month*, 1784. " This diſorder has much reduced my fleſh " and my ſtrength; but I am ſcarcely in " any pain; nor am I ſenſible at preſent of " any ſymptom which threatens any. The " account I received by thy letter of our " friend ****** affected me much. We " ſeem to be in a ſimilar weak ſtate, and " as it were diſſolving apace into the earth " whence we originally ſprang; for, *duſt* " *thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt return*: " and, whenever we die, whether ſoon or

" late,

" late, I hope we ſhall have an unſhaken
" truſt in the common Father of us all,
" and reſign to the common lot of all fleſh
" with compoſure and without regret. Re-
" member me not as a forſaken and miſera-
" ble man, for I enjoy even now, and ſuf-
" fer but little, very little, comparatively
" ſpeaking. I rejoice in the good provi-
" dence of God, which is over us all con-
" tinually for our good, and is alike gra-
" cious to all his creatures in what he gives
" and what he denies them. And, in all
" the diſpenſations of his wiſdom, let us
" truſt in him, our common Father, Pro-
" tector, and Friend."

He at length gradually ſunk under the ſlow but irreſiſtible force of a conſumption, and departed on the 7th of the eleventh month, (November,) 1784, at the houſe of a friend at Newbury, in Berkſhire. From the foregoing account of the ſtate of his mind, it is almoſt needleſs to add that he met death with a becoming and humble fortitude. He was interred, at his own requeſt,

queſt, in the Quakers burial-ground at Reading, on the 14th of the month above-mentioned; and his funeral was attended by a great number of his friends, who were deſirous of teſtifying their eſteem for his memory by this laſt mark of attention.

N. B. *The firſt Diſcourſe in this collection has been incorrectly printed in Ireland, and attributed to another preacher. It is now printed from a more correct copy, and reſtored to the proper owner.*

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.

THERE is a paſſage of ſacred writ which has been revived in my remembrance during the ſilence of this meeting; and the train of reflections which it excited has ſealed inſtruction to my mind, and furniſhed me with renewed cauſe for humiliation and gratitude. The import of it is this: *Men and brethren, what ſhall we do to be ſaved?*

No perſon, who ſeriouſly believes in the exiſtence of a God, in a future ſtate, and in the awful doctrine of rewards and pu-

 niſhments,

niſhments, can be indifferent reſpecting what may be his lot, when he ſhall be diſpoſſeſſed of this frail tabernacle of clay which he now inhabits, and which is approaching to the period of its diſſolution. It cannot be a matter of indifference to him, whether he ſhall finally receive the irrevocable ſentence of *Go, ye curſed*, into the regions of unſpeakable miſery; or, *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father*, inherit the kingdom prepared for the righteous;—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, and into thy Maſter's reſt.

This concern has prompted many to enquire what is eſſentially neceſſary for them to believe and practiſe, in order to render themſelves the proper objects of divine complacence, and furniſh them with a well-grounded hope of a happy and glorious immortality.

The honeſt and ſincere, in every nation under heaven, have formed different ideas of the requiſites of ſalvation; and they have, of courſe, purſued as different meaſures

ſures to accompliſh that deſirable and bleſſed end.

It does not appear to be my preſent buſineſs to particulariſe any of the various ſyſtems of faith which are adopted by any party amongſt mankind. It is not to controvert matters in which ſincere men of various denominations moſt ſurely believe, but rather to recommend them to ſtand open always to conviction, and to a ſtrict attention to thoſe rules of conduct, which, on an impartial examination, appear to them moſt agreeable to the will of heaven. I ſhall therefore addreſs myſelf to thoſe, in whatever religious ſociety they are found, whoſe honeſt inquiries have not yet been attended with ſufficient conviction, — have not yet led them clearly to perceive what the terms are on which their future happineſs depends, and are, therefore, looking one upon another, whilſt this important queſtion is found at leaſt in their *hearts*, if not in their *mouths*, *Men and brethren, what ſhall we do to be ſaved?* An inquiry of

this ſolemn nature, ariſing from a proper ſenſibility of the want of better inſtruction, is an indication of that concern and holy anxiety which will ever be acceptable to the Father of ſure mercies. He regards ſuch humble inquirers, after truth and peace with him, with gracious condeſcenſion, and, if they rely on the guidance of his Spirit, will finally conduct them to his glorious reſt.

I ſhall not preſume arrogantly to dictate to any, reſpecting matters of ſo important a concern as that of the ſoul's ſalvation. Every man ſhould exerciſe thoſe talents and gifts, with which the Father of Lights has endued him, in a cloſe and ſincere attention to the voice of the internal teacher, and in the diſcovery of thoſe truths, both practical and ſpeculative, which have an immediate relation to the happineſs of a being circumſtanced as he is. I ſhall ſimply propoſe thoſe things which, in my view, and from my own experience as an individual, appear

pear to me worthy of God for their author, and worthy of man's moſt ſerious attention.

It is an indiſputable truth that we made not ourſelves : *It is he that hath made us*, ſaid the Pſalmiſt, *and not we ourſelves*, for *we are alſo his offspring*. The matter which forms the univerſe, the vehicles which the ſoul informs, and the more noble intellectual powers and faculties we poſſeſs, derive their being from the eternal Fountain of all power and intelligence, whom we characteriſe by the awful names of Jah, Jehovah, and God. It is alſo indiſputably evident to me, that we were brought into exiſtence with the benevolent deſign of our finally ſuſtaining the confluent dignities of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. The Lord Almighty hath, in unſpeakable mercy, deſigned, that, after we have endured a ſeaſon of probation, a conflict with our paſſions, excited by numerous cauſes, and a fight of afflictions, we ſhould finally receive a glorious reward, a

perpetuity of unmixed felicity, in the regions of eternity.

But this desirable and excellent end is not to be effected by what is generally called Fate, the laws of necessity, or the arbitrary will, power, or decree, of the Author of our existence. God hath, in his wisdom, constituted us free and intelligent beings. He has endued us with faculties and powers capable of apprehending and practising those essential duties which he makes the condition of our final acceptance with him. He offers, but does not impose; he graciously invites, but does not compel, us to accept of happiness. He shews us the spiritual Canaan, the land of the saints inheritance, in every generation: he gives us power to possess, but does not compel us to enter therein. Good and evil are clearly set before us, but our election is not constrained to either. The oeconomy of his moral government over rational beings is laid in divine wisdom and eternal righteousness. The great Sovereign of the universe

is

is no reſpecter of perſons; for, of one blood hath he made all nations that dwell on the face of the earth. They ſtand in the ſame relation to the univerſal Father, Shepherd, and Biſhop, of ſouls, who tenderly invites the whole race of mankind to come unto him that they may finally inherit the joy of his ſalvation. O unſpeakable mercy! unutterable theme! It is ſufficient to awaken the moſt glowing ſenſations of exalted and grateful praiſe to that God who is the ſalvation and glory of the righteous generations, *the rock of their ſtrength, and their everlaſting refuge.*

To this doctrine the holy apoſtle bore an ample and explicit teſtimony: *Of a truth,* (ſaid he,) *I perceive that God is no reſpecter of perſons, but, in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him.*

Thus we find that it is the fear of the Lord, and an obedience to the law of righteouſneſs, which are the terms alone by

which men can be ſaved. *If ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die ; but, if ye, through the ſpirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live.* This is a propoſition of univerſal importance; a propoſition which relates to every individual in the vaſt community of mankind, however circumſtanced, whether bond or free, rich or poor, or in whatever climate they reſide.

All this may, indeed, be acknowledged both by thoſe within and without the audience of my voice, who yet are in doubt *what they ſhall do to be ſaved* with an everlaſting ſalvation. They want to be informed of the preciſe ideas that ſhould be affixed to the conditions contained in the text ; although, perhaps, they readily apprehend that the terms *life* and *death* mean future happineſs and miſery.

I ſhall therefore attempt, according to the ability I am endued with at this ſeaſon, to give you my thoughts on the important ſubject under conſideration.

To live after the fleſh is to live in the gratification of our animal appetites and paſſions beyond the bounds of reaſon, temperance, and ſobriety. All the works of darkneſs, which, by the ſame apoſtle, are termed *deeds of the body*, all pride, wrath, envy, hatred, covetouſneſs, with all the deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs, are, in other words, *living after the fleſh*. Theſe things not only tend to the injury of peace and ſociety, and are a bane to that happineſs which is the reſult of genuine virtue even in this life; not only introduce numerous errors into the animal and moral ſyſtem, and aggravate the infirmities to which theſe bodies are incident, but render us unfit for thoſe contemplations, and that ſupreme felicity, which are adapted to the dignity of rational and immortal ſpirits. God, in his wiſdom, hath made man a little (and perhaps but a little) lower than the angels. He has endued him with a capacity for contemplating and adoring him, the ſource of uncreated excellence and perfection,

fection, and would crown him with ſuperior honour, glory, and happineſs, to what ſenſual gratifications can ever afford. Let us not then degrade ourſelves beneath that rank we were deſigned to fill in creation, but remember our immortal deſcent, the cauſe of our being, and its end.

We have, indeed, bodies, and are impriſoned within elements, which excite within us numerous appetites, affections, and paſſions; but all theſe are to be gratified within certain bounds, in a degree proportioned to our exigences and neceſſities, of which the ſupreme intelligence has implanted a principle within us to judge.

This principle of intelligence, although called by a variety of names, and diſtinguiſhed by various appellations, in the various profeſſions amongſt men, is one in nature, and univerſal amongſt mankind. It is the ſpirit in man that giveth a right underſtanding: it is the light that (more or leſs) enlightens every man: it is the word of God in the heart, and the word of faith

faith which the apoſtle preached to the Gentiles: it is the grace that hath appeared unto all men, teaching them to deny all ungodlineſs and the world's luſts, and to live righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly, in this preſent world: and, finally, it is the ſupreme reaſon, the law of truth and rectitude, the teſt of virtue and vice, which God himſelf hath placed in the hearts of all men; and happy are thoſe who hear and obey it in all things.

I would not be underſtood to mean that this principle, of which I am ſpeaking, is deſigned to inſtruct us in all truths which the human mind may, in its own activity and wiſdom, attempt to inveſtigate; or to give us a clear inſight into thoſe numerous ſpeculative ſubjects, which have not only unprofitably employed mankind, and diverted their attention from things more ſubſtantial, but which have perplexed and divided them from generation to generation.

But,

But, by the exercise of this pure, holy, heavenly, principle, we may apprehend those truths which belong to us, and which have an essential relation to the prime end of our being. Of these truths the Father of Spirits has constituted man an adequate judge.

This is implied by the question which our Lord himself proposed to a people misled by the traditions of their fathers, and who had, through the neglect of this principle, taken for doctrine the commandments of men : *Yea, and why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right ?*

The obligation to all our social, relative, and religious, duties arises from the relations we stand in to our fellow-creatures and to God, the holy author of our existence. The general relation, which our fellow-creatures stand in to us, is that of brethren, children of the same universal parent, subject to the same necessities, and formed for the same unspeakably glorious and happy end. Hence it is our duty to exercise the amiable

amiable virtues of love, forbearance, kindneſs, and charity, to all around us ; to ſeek their happineſs, and lighten the weight of human miſery to the utmoſt of our power.

There are, alſo, various accidental relations amongſt mankind, as maſter, ſervant, father, governor, and numerous others ; all which have their correſpondent duties.

The relation we ſtand in to the great Author of our being is that of children, which is one and immutable at all times. A life, agreeable to that relation we ſtand in to the Lord Almighty, is that of filial fear. Obedience and worſhip are our indiſpenſable duty to him ; and the rules of juſtice, charity, and brotherly kindneſs, are indiſpenſable obligations on us to the reſt of mankind.

Thus far, perhaps, the perſons, whom I immediately addreſs at this time, may concur with me in ſentiment : but they, as well as myſelf, are perhaps conſcious of having failed in numerous inſtances of diſcharging

charging their religious duties to God, and their ſocial duties one to another.

We have all ſinned, and fallen ſhort of the glory of God. We have multiplied our tranſgreſſions without number, and our manifold iniquities riſe before us as a thick cloud, obſcuring the brightneſs of that Sun of eternal Righteouſneſs, which would otherwiſe illuminate our underſtandings with its marvellous lights. *Who, therefore,* (ſays the humiliated penitent ſoul,) *ſhall deliver us from the body of this death?* Who ſhall take from us the weight of our ſins, under which we groan inceſſantly? *Who ſhall deliver us from the wrath to come? Men and brethren, what ſhall we do to be ſaved?*

The conditions of our redemption, and reconciliation with the gracious Father of us all, are clearly expreſſed in the oracles of ſacred truth. The placability of the divine nature is repeatedly aſſerted. He, with whom dwells wiſdom, juſtice, righteouſneſs, and ſtrength, is alſo repreſented to us in the glorious adorable character of a God

of

of mercy, long-ſuffering, and never-failing kindneſs; as a Being ready to blot out our tranſgreſſions from the celeſtial regiſter on our ſincere repentance, and to remember them no more. He will reſtore unto the humble penitent the joy of his ſalvation: he will guide him by his counſel, and afterwards receive him into glory.

This important and intereſting doctrine was typified under the law, ſpoken of by the prophets, and glorioufly aſſerted by the Son of God, who is our mediator with the Father, and the hope of all the righteous generations. In his character was diſplayed to mankind, in the moſt eminent and ſtriking manner, the provident care, mercy, and goodneſs, of God towards his whole rational creation. Like ſheep they have gone aſtray from the univerſal Shepherd and Biſhop of ſouls. They have revolted from his government, and widely wandered from the path of purity and holineſs, which is alſo the path of pleaſantneſs and peace; that path of moral rectitude and truth, that bright

bright and ſhining light, which (like the luminous orb after it ariſes in our hemiſphere) ſhines with increaſing refulgence and ſplendor till it arrive at the meridian altitude of glorious perfect day. The light, which ſhines from heaven on the underſtandings of men, will lead all thoſe, who purſue its direction, by degrees of experience, through the wilderneſs of this world in perfect ſafety: it will bring them, when the days of their warfare are accompliſhed, to the grand end of their creation, — to that complete fruition of bliſs, which is figuratively repreſented to us by a city that has foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God; a city, whoſe walls are ſalvation, and whoſe gates are eternal praiſe; a city, that has no need of the elementary light of the ſun, moon, or ſtars; for, the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof: a city, where God reigneth triumphantly amongſt his ſaints, and is to them an inexhauſtible fountain of joy, light, and felicity, for ever. There the weary tribula-

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ted pilgrim finds an end of all his anxiety and labour ; the days of his mourning are ended, and he receives the reward of his faith and patience, the fruition of his hopes, even the eternal ſalvation of his ſoul.

The important meſſage which Chriſt, the glorious high-prieſt of the Chriſtian religion, had in commiſſion from his and our Father, from his and our God, was, that he compaſſionated his creatures, incompaſſed with the diſtreſſes that their ſins had brought upon them, — that he willed not their everlaſting ſeparation from him, the ſource of happineſs, but that he was willing they ſhould be reconciled to him. For this end, he called upon them to *repent and be converted*, that their ſins might be forgiven them, and that they might finally enter into his reſt.

This was the intereſting doctrine which the Saviour of the world promulgated, and happy are thoſe who hear and obey it!

Repent, and be converted, that your ſins may be forgiven you. It is not the aſſent of the

 lip,

lip, and of the tongue, to the glorious truths of the goſpel; it is not the ſplendid formality of high profeſſion; it is not crying Lord, Lord! in the hour of ſtrong conviction; but it is a ſurrender of the will and affections, a renovation of the heart and conformity to the divine image, which can alone gain us an admittance into the New Jeruſalem, the city of God.

If we make an impartial ſurvey of our paſt lives, review our frequent revoltings, and compare our conduct with the convictions we have received of right and wrong, virtue and vice, there is ſcarcely a ſoul preſent but muſt feel ſome degree of remorſe, ſome degree of repentance, for the turpitude of his morals, and his want of love, obedience, and gratitude, to ſo gracious a Father, who has encompaſſed us with bleſſings, and preſerved us, by his providence, from the earlieſt period of our lives to the preſent hour. On theſe ſolemn reflections we muſt (I ſay again) witneſs ſome degree of repentance;

repentance ; but, unhappily for us, the impreſſions that are made on our minds, on a ſerious review of our actions, are ſoon cancelled, ſoon effaced, by the influence which a variety of creaturely objects are ſuffered to make upon us, and, like the early dew, they ſoon paſs away : *Of the rock that begat them they have been unmindful.* Cleanſed, in ſome degree, as we are by the waters of contrition, we again become defiled by a repetition of that iniquity, which, in the moments of our humiliation, we had determined to renounce and forſake. We are again caught in the ſnare of our luſts, and captivated by objects which have a tendency to alienate our affections from the one adorable Object, the ſource of our ſafety and felicity, the only permanent and ſupreme good. What is to be done in the fatal dilemma to which our inconſtancy to our virtuous reſolutions has reduced us ? Shall we deſpair of the divine mercy, which we have ſo often abuſed ; of that goodneſs we have ſo long trifled with ? or, fear that our

future endeavours will be vain, and that, for our multiplied tranſgreſſions, we ſhall be made *a deſolation for ever!* God forbid! Let us rather, in the depths of ſelf-abaſement, proſtrate our ſouls at the throne of grace, and humbly implore the continued mercy of the univerſal Parent. Let us beg for ſtrength and holy ability to withſtand ſucceeding temptations, and run the ways of his commandments with delight.

As a father pitieth his children, ſo he pitieth thoſe who fear him, and, in immortal kindneſs, will bring them to the joy of his ſalvation. He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but duſt. Although he hideth his face for a moment, yet with everlaſting kindneſs will he remember Zion; for, *her maker is her huſband, the Lord of Hoſts is his name.* Let us therefore beſeech him, in the fervency of prayer, to ſend forth help from his holy ſanctuary, and ſtrengthen us to renew and keep our covenants with him to the end of our days.

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Let us refrain from the commiſſion of evil, and wait on him in the ſilence of all fleſh, that the Fountain of light and truth may again enlighten us to ſee ourſelves as we are ſeen of him, and inflame our hearts with that celeſtial fire which purgeth away the intellectual filth and droſs that prevent the aſcent of the ſoul God-ward, and render it an unfit habitation for his holineſs to dwell in. As our own backſlidings have frequently corrected us, and covered our minds with anxiety, let our future conduct, directed by his grace, atone for what is paſt, and, by a converſation ordered aright, let us *glorify our Father who is in heaven.*

I feel, at this ſeaſon, the influence (in degree) of that celeſtial charity which breathes through Immanuel to the whole creation of God, and wiſheth ſalvation to every ſoul that inhabits the earth. In that I intreat you, as a being ſubject to the ſame infirmities which you ſometimes unavailably deplore, *Repent, and be converted.* Repentance you have frequently experienced, but

too little, I fear, of that eſſential converſion which the goſpel of Jeſus propoſes. It is highly probable that ſome perſons preſent have ſeen the neceſſity of that renovation of heart, and reformation of manners, intended by converſion; and yet, urged by the powerful prevalence of their luſts and of ſelf-love, are ſeeking, if poſſible, to find ſome other remedy for a wounded conſcience than that which the ſimplicity of the goſpel requires as a neceſſary prelude to the favour of God. They are enquiring *What ſhall we do to be ſaved?* and, like the young man in the goſpel, they have been animated with a deſire to be inrolled among the diſciples of Jeſus, who are called heirs of God, and co-heirs with Chriſt, of that inheritance which is incorruptible and full of glory. They have aſked counſel of the wonderful Counſellor, and addreſſed him with the important queſtion, *What good thing ſhall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* yet, when the unchangeable terms of ſalvation have been propoſed; when they have been

been told they muſt part with all their idols, they have gone away ſorrowful: the terms have appeared too hard for them to comply with; and, like the king who wanted to be cured of his leproſy, and was ſtaggered at the thought of taking ſo long a journey as the prophet had directed, are crying out, *Are not Abana and Pharphar, rivers of Damaſcus, better than all the waters of Iſrael?* will not their waters cleanſe me from my impurity?

Thus, numbers among mankind are ſtriving to elude thoſe meaſures which the goſpel of Jeſus enjoins, and are ſubſtituting others in their ſtead, which are better adapted to ſoothe the carnal mind, and prevent that mortification of the deeds of the body which human nature ſhrinks from with horror. Man is deſirous to poſſeſs the crown of eternal life, but not willing to bear the croſs. He would indeed reign with Chriſt, but not ſuffer with him. He would accompany him to the mount of transfiguration, but not to Golgotha. He would be

his attendant at his glorification, but not in the awful ſcenes of his humiliation.

Divers have wandered as from mountain to mountain and from hill to hill, ſeeking for the living in the ſepulchres of the dead. They have ſometimes adopted one creed, and ſometimes another,—practiſed external ordinances, and complied with empty forms; addreſſing themſelves frequently to guides, as blind and impotent as themſelves, with this awful query, *Men and brethren, what ſhall we do to be ſaved?*

I ſay again, repent, and be converted; for, this is the only way to find ſalvation to your ſouls. No external ceremonies, no verbal confeſſions, no change of opinions merely, can accompliſh this repentance and converſion, and afford you the conſequent rewards of a glorious immortality. This important work of ſalvation cannot be effected in man's time, will, activity, or wiſdom, but is wrought in him by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghoſt, which is as a conſuming fire to the adverſa-

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ry, to the adverſe part of man, to the corrupt will, which would not that Chriſt ſhould reign in his kingdom, and that God ſhould be all in all.

It is the baptiſm of fire, of which John's was but a type, which, diſcriminating the pure from the impure, gathers the wheat into the garner, but conſumes the chaff with unquenchable burnings.

In the world there are many voices which correſpond not with the voice of Chriſt, the only Shepherd and Biſhop of ſouls, whom we ought to hear and obey in all things, but which are the voices of thoſe who *teach for hire, and divine for money: who look for their gain from their quarters*, and are ready to make war againſt conſcientious men, who cannot put into their mouths. Theſe have found it their worldly intereſt to lead the deluded people from, rather than to, Chriſt, the glorious high-prieſt, the life and light of men. They have attempted to render that myſterious which the Holy Ghoſt has left clear, and to

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perplex the underſtandings of men with vain metaphyſical ſpeculations, without making them either wiſer or better. This claſs of men, whoſe *God is their belly, whoſe glory is their ſhame*, have indeed proved *phyſicians of no value*.

Many have enquired of theſe, *What ſhall we do to be ſaved?* but they, not having experienced the work of ſalvation in themſelves, are incapable to inſtruct others in the way that leads to eternal life. Inſtead of laying the axe to the root of the corrupt tree, they have only attempted to lop off ſome of its branches, and reſcind ſome of its moſt palpable excreſcences. They have been crying, Peace, peace! when the alarm of danger ſhould have ſounded in the ears of the people. They have preſcribed emollients where the moſt ſearching operation was expedient; and, healing the wound of the daughter of Zion deceitfully, have lulled multitudes into a fatal ſecurity, by flattering them with hopes, which, it is to

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be feared, will end in confuſion and diſappointment, and periſh for ever.

There are others who aſſume the office of miniſters, the purity of whoſe intentions charity forbids me to diſpute; who, like a man that attempts to anſwer a queſtion before he has fully heard it, have too precipitately embarked in the important work of inſtructing ſouls in the great things of ſalvation. Theſe are, like Ephraim, *a cake not turned*; are not yet inſtructed in the way of the Lord perfectly, and, whilſt they are teaching others, had need themſelves to be taught what are the firſt principles of the oracles of God. The coal from the holy altar has not yet been applied to their lips, and they have been miniſtering, by the law of a carnal commandment, without being endued with the power of an endleſs life. They have run on the Lord's errand unſent, and have not eſſentially profited the people. They have taken upon them to guide thoſe who are inquiring *what ſhall we do to be ſaved*, and have led

led them indeed from the confines of Egypt, but leave them, undirected to the ſpiritual Moſes, to wander in uncertainty, and to compaſs a mountain of doubts in the wilderneſs.

May the Lord Almighty, in his infinite mercy, gather theſe who are wandering as ſheep without a ſhepherd, and lead them into the ſacred incloſures of his fold of eternal reſt and ſafety!

May the nations of them that have ſat in darkneſs be again enlightened by the glorious breaking forth of the Sun of righteouſneſs in their hearts, that our Zion may yet become an eternal excellency, and the joy of many generations!

Let it not be thought, by any thing I have ſaid, that I look upon all, who appear girded with the linen ephod of other Chriſtian ſocieties, either as impoſtors, or the deluded votaries of Antichriſt. I freely declare I doubt not but many of them have had a diſpenſation of the goſpel committed to them; and, although they may be biaſſed

aſſed by the prejudice of education and the traditions of their fathers, yet the root of the matter ſeems to be in them. I eſteem theſe, in whatever ſociety they are found, and in whatever veſtments they are clothed, as my brethren in the fellowſhip of the everlaſting goſpel of Chriſt. Yet I cannot direct the ſearcher after truth, who is penſively inquiring *What he ſhall do to be ſaved*, to the miniſtry of any man; but would rather recommend him to the immediate teaching of the word nigh in the heart, even the ſpirit of God. This is the only infallible teacher, and the primary adequate rule of faith and manners, and will lead thoſe who attend to its dictates into the peaceable paths of ſafety and of truth. Let the earneſt humble petition of your ſouls be, to the Father of ſure mercies, *Lead me by thy counſel, and afterwards receive me into glory*: let thy rod and thy ſtaff ſupport me, through the uncertainties of time, to a happy concluſion in thy favour. Ye need not, ſaith the apoſtle to the church formerly,

formerly, that any man teach you, ſave as this anointing teacheth, which is truth, and no lie. Ceaſe, therefore, from man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils, and whoſe exiſtence is but as a vapour; for, wherein is he to be accounted of? As a fallible being he is ſubject to frequent deception, and is therefore liable to deceive; but the ſpirit of God can neither be deceived, nor will it deceive any ſoul that ſubmits to its holy government, and obeys its dictates. In this is our ſafety and ſtrength, and the hope of our eternal reward, when our weary pilgrimage ſhall come to an end.

O ye penitent prodigals, my ſoul earneſtly longs for your reſtoration to the mercy and favour of God!

Ye, who are reduced, by your wanderings in the wilderneſs of this world, to a ſtate of extreme poverty, to the want of that bread which comes down from the celeſtial regions, and which can alone nouriſh the ſoul up to eternal life; — ye, who have long been attempting to ſatisfy the cravings of an immortal

mortal ſpirit with the huſks and ſhells of an empty profeſſion of religion, look towards your Father, from whom you have revolted. Remember that in his houſe there is bread enough, and to ſpare: there your ſouls may be richly repleniſhed with enduring ſubſtance. Return, O houſe of Iſrael, from your backſlidings, and ſeek the face of your everlaſting Father and Friend! In unſpeakable kindneſs he hath declared that he will be found of thoſe who ſeek him in ſincerity of heart; and that as many as knock at his gate for an entrance ſhall be admitted to his preſence, and receive the remiſſion of their ſins. O unſpeakable condeſcenſion! unutterable love! Though glorioufly exalted above the heaven of heavens, and placed at the ſummit of all perfection, yet his gracious regard is to the ſons of men, and he is *beautifying the place of his feet.*

The humble addreſs which the prodigal made to his father, the return that he met with, and the manner of his reception into favour,

favour, are exceedingly expreſſive of the becoming penitence of the one, and the mercy and benignity of the other. *I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no longer worthy to be called thy ſon; make me therefore as one of thy hired ſervants.* The injured neglected parent compaſſionates his diſtreſs, takes the prodigal in his arms, owns him for his ſon, orders the fatted calf to be killed, and rebukes the envy of his elder brother with *this my ſon is dead, but he is alive again; he was loſt, but is found.* O the height and depth of the goodneſs and mercy of God! Look unto him, ye ends of the earth, and be ſaved!

Before I conclude, I find it in mine heart to addreſs another claſs in this meeting: a claſs who have earneſtly ſought, and happily found, him of whom Moſes and the prophets did write, Jeſus of Nazareth, the Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us. You, who once were ſcattered as ſheep without a ſhepherd on the barren mountains and deſolate hills of an empty profeſſion, the great Shepherd

Shepherd of ſouls hath gathered within the ſacred incloſures of his fold, and you are under the peculiar protection of the Lord Almighty. He hath plucked you as brands out of the burning, and redeemed you to himſelf with the ſaving ſtrength of his right arm. When the blackneſs of darkneſs ſurrounded your dwellings; when the terror of his judgements encompaſſed you for diſobedience, by his light you walked through the region and valley of the ſhadow of death. Although for a moment he turned his face from you, yet, in everlaſting kindneſs, hath he gathered you from the world to himſelf. Oh! may you ever remember his unutterable mercy, and dedicate the remainder of your days to the honour of his name.

My ſpirit ſalutes you, in the endeared affection of the goſpel of peace, as fellow-travellers towards the land of eternal reſt, and wiſhes your eſtabliſhment in righteouſneſs for ever;—that you may abide in holy patience the fiery trial of faith through-

out the days of your earthly pilgrimage, and become as fixed pillars in the celeſtial building and houſe of God.

If you ſtedfaſtly abide in the word of faith, wherein you have been taught, neither the malice of men, nor the united powers of darkneſs, ſhall be able to pluck you out of the hands of him who is your judge, your king, your protector, your father, and everlaſting friend. *As a garden incloſed* has he made you, in ſafe dwellings has he appointed your lots, and, in the end of days, he will be your refuge for ever. When this earth ſhall be wrapped together like a ſcroll, and the ſun and moon be darkened; when every glorious conſtellation of the heavens ſhall ſink into everlaſting obſcurity, and the elements of this world ſhall be diſſolved with fervent heat; you will poſſeſs a habitation within the ſuperior regions of a new heaven and a new earth, where the Lord your righteouſneſs dwells.

Many of the pretended wiſe, learned, and prudent, of this world, who have ſought to

to climb up ſome other way rather than enter by Chriſt, who is the door into the ſheepfold, may pity you as fools, or ridicule you as enthuſiaſts; they may account your life madneſs, and your end without honour; but they will one day be aſtoniſhed at the ſtrangeneſs of your ſalvation, when they may ſee, to their confuſion, that you are finally numbered among the children of God, and your inheritance is among the ſaints.

In the world you are to expect tribulations of various kinds, ſickneſs, diſeaſe, and pain: temptations and diſappointments invade the breaſts of the moſt temperate, virtuous, and religious, among men. A cup of mixture, more or leſs impregnated with the wormwood and the gall, is the lot of humanity, deſigned doubtleſs to effect a valuable purpoſe by him who afflicts not willingly, nor without a righteous and benevolent cauſe, the children of men.

As the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are the ways of the Almighty than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.

We ſee a little, and but a very little, of the amazing univerſal plan of his government over rational and immortal ſpirits. It lies beyond the reach of the moſt exalted created faculties to comprehend his wiſdom throughout the righteous adminiſtration of his providence, which is unſearchable. It is our duty, as frail, dependent, and impotent, beings, to meet every diſpenſation with that reſignation of ſpirit which inceſſantly breathes the humble language of *Not my will, O Lord, but thine, be done in all things.* Though the times are gloomy, the out-goings of the morning are of God. He will yet comfort the waſte places of Zion, and build up her deſolations. He will make her wilderneſs as Eden, and her deſerts as the garden of the Lord: joy and gladneſs ſhall be found therein, thankſgiving and the voice of melody. Awake, therefore,

fore, and put on ſtrength, ye who have *lien amongſt the pots*; ye, who have been afflicted, toſſed with tempeſts, and not comforted; for, the hour of your ſalvation is near. Abide in holy patience, and hope to the end. It is our duty, under the evils which we feel, and which our prudence could not prevent, to implore divine aid to endure them with patience, rather than to pray that they may be removed from us; leſt, like ignorant children, we ſhould ſeek to avoid that potion, from our heavenly Father's hand, which is graciouſly deſigned to remove, or prevent, a greater evil. This is not the place of your reſt, but a ſtate of probation, a painful pilgrimage, a land of pits and of ſnares, through which lies a narrow path to the regions of eternal peace. The ſoul, by reaſon of its connection with the body, and while incloſed within the walls of fleſh, cannot extend its views, and employ its faculties, on divine objects without frequent interruption. But, when the days of its captivity are accompliſhed, it

will be capable of a more glorious expanſion in the kingdom of light and immortality, and poſſeſs that joy which is unſpeakable and full of glory. Therefore, in all the calamities to which we are ſubject in the houſe of our pilgrimage, we have a place of refuge to flee to, where ſafety is alone to be found. Though, indeed, we muſt feel in ſome degree as men, yet we may poſſeſs the patience, reſignation, and holy fortitude, of Chriſtians, who are looking for a better country, a more excellent inheritance, in that city whoſe inhabitants have no occaſion to complain that they are ſick.

Be ye, therefore, ſtedfaſt, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your labour ſhall not be in vain. Be ye, in your ſeveral ſtations in the church and in the world, as way-marks to the honeſt ſincere inquirers, who are aſking the way to Zion, and, from a true ſenſe of their condition, are crying out, *What ſhall we do to be ſaved!* Shew forth, by your example of charity, ſobriety,

briety, temperance, and holineſs of life, that you are redeemed from the ſpirit of the world that lies in wickedneſs. Be not captivated by its trifling amuſements, nor enſnared by its lying vanities, but retain the fear of God, which will keep the heart clean, and prove a ſource of ſureſt conſolation when all things elſe will be unavailing. Let the purity of your lives demonſtrate that you are attentive to things more excellent, and have placed your affections on things permanent and eternal; things which eſſentially relate to the ſalvation of the ſoul.

Thus, you will be a means of leading others in the way of truth and righteouſneſs, and become the conſecrated temples of the Holy Ghoſt. You will witneſs an increaſe of ſtrength, wiſdom, and holy ſtability, from day to day, and perſeverance in the way that is everlaſting.

Finally, my brethren, farewel. I commend you to God, the great Shepherd of Iſrael, and to the word of his grace, as the only

infallible guide to direct you *What ye ſhall do to be ſaved.* It is able to build you up in the moſt holy faith, to direct your feet in the paths of righteouſneſs and peace, and, finally, to put you in poſſeſſion of a glorious inheritance, among the ſaints, that will never fade away!

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE II.

THEN Jeſus ſaid to his diſciples, a rich man ſhall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven; and again I ſay unto you, it is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his diſciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, ſaying, who then can be ſaved? It is no wonder, indeed, that theſe appeared to them to be *hard ſayings*, and that they ſhould excite their aſtoniſhment, if they apprehended by them, that the kingdom of heaven was only open to poverty and wretchedneſs. It appears, I think, beyond controverſy,

controverſy, that, notwithſtanding the diſciples attended to the doctrine of ſuch an excellent miniſter, who ſpoke with peculiar authority, yet they did not at once comprehend the whole of his doctrine and works. Their underſtandings were gradually opened and informed: they were led on ſtep by ſtep. The work of religion was not with them, as ſome people have imagined the work of religion to be, an inſtantaneous work: they went on from ſtrength to ſtrength, and from one degree of knowledge to another, till they had acquired as much as was neceſſary for them. They were not inſtructed in all truths, but in ſuch as reſpected the duties of their day and of their ſtation, and which, in the courſe of their pilgrimage in this world, filled them with a humble hope and expectation of ultimately entering into one that is infinitely better, there to partake of the joy of their Lord, and of that reſt from their labours which is prepared for the people of God. Thus, we find, when they were

were told that *they muſt eat his fleſh, and drink his blood*, — that it was neceſſary a man ſhould *hate his father and mother, his wife, his children, and even his own life*,—accepting theſe texts, at firſt, in a ſtrict and literal ſenſe, it is no wonder they ſhould think them *hard ſayings*: hard indeed it would be if it were neceſſary that the affections, which flow from conſanguinity and affinity, muſt be totally eradicated, and the malignant paſſion of hatred be ſubſtituted, in order to render us ſucceſsful candidates for an inheritance that is incorruptible and that fadeth not away.

But it is clear to me, beyond the leaſt doubt, that our Lord deſigned, throughout the whole of his miniſtry, to excite and to ſtrengthen, inſtead of weakening, thoſe bands by which ſociety is held together.

He deſigned to inſpire us with the moſt friendly affections, as the main, or principal, motive to the diſcharge of the various ſocial and relative duties: this appears to me to be comprehended in the ſecond commandment,

mandment, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.* With reſpect to this particular paſſage of the New Teſtament, it may, perhaps, be profitable, at leaſt to the younger part of this aſſembly, whoſe experience has not yet been much, and whoſe obſervations have been but tranſient, to advert a little to the occaſion of theſe *hard ſayings*, which excited the amazement of the diſciples.

It ſeems there was a young man who had heard of the fame of Jeſus; who wanted to be inſtructed with reſpect to what meaſures were neceſſary for him to adopt and to purſue in order to inherit everlaſting life. Urged by this deſire, he makes an application unto Jeſus, addreſſing him after this manner, *Good maſter, what good thing ſhall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Our ſaviour enumerated ſeveral of the commandments, to which he replied, and no doubt with the greateſt degree of ſincerity, *All theſe have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?* It appears that our Lord meant to bring his love and his virtue to a ſevere teſt.

teſt. *One thing*, ſays he, *thou lackeſt*; *if thou wilt be perfect, ſell that thou haſt, and give to the poor*; *take up thy croſs, and follow me, and thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven.* It ſeems that our Saviour ſtruck at his darling paſſion, the love of money; for, upon hearing this propoſal, it is evident that he preferred, at that time, retaining his corporeal poſſeſſions, that preſent temporary good, to the future and remote one of eternal life, for, *he went away ſorrowful.*

Then Jeſus ſaid to his diſciples, *A rich man ſhall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.* It muſt, indeed, be acknowledged, that, ſeeing we have nothing which we have not received, — that we are not proprietors of the inheritance which we poſſeſs, but tenants only at will; for, *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof, and the cattle on a thouſand hills*,—we ought to relinquiſh, to give up, a part, or the whole, of that which is lent us, when it is the will of the giver to make that requiſition: but it is evident to me, that this particular requiſition

requiſition intends not a general command. I conceive, that it is not riches, merely as riches, which can prevent our entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It may be ſaid, with equal truth, that *it is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a poor man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*, if he have nothing but poverty and wretchedneſs to recommend him. It is very evident, from divers circumſtances, that our Lord's controverſy was not with riches, but the ſpirit of pride, which too frequently poſſeſſes the hearts of the rich; for, we have an account of a rich, and yet of a good, man, Joſeph of Arimathea. From the ſeveral accounts of the evangeliſts it appears he was an honourable counſellor, a rich man, a good, a juſt, man, a diſciple of Jeſus, and one that *waited for the kingdom of God*, though it was probable that he was a member of the Sanhedrim.

It ſeems to me that the rich man, deſigned in this text, is ſuch a man as is repreſented to us in the parable: *There was a certain*

certain rich man, who was clothed with purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day: there was alſo a certain beggar, that was laid at his gate, full of ſores, of whom there can be no doubt that he was a proper object of human ſympathy. He was laid at his gate full of ſores: his requiſition was humble, deſiring to be fed only with *the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table*; *moreover, the dogs came and licked his ſores. It came to paſs that the beggar died, and that he was carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom: the rich man alſo died, and was buried*; *and he lifted up his eyes in hell, and ſaw Lazarus in Abraham's boſom. He cried out, in a ſort of agony, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and ſend Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame: but Abraham anſwered, Son, remember, that thou, in thy lifetime, receiveđſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things*; *but now, he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* But we are not to infer from this text, that, merely his being clothed

clothed in purple and fine linen, or faring ſumptuouſly, was the cauſe of his conſequent miſery; or, that it followed of courſe, having received the good things of this life, he ſhould ſuffer the worſt of evils in the next; but it appears he wanted that brotherly ſympathy, that friendly affection, recommended to us in the character of the good Samaritan, which is not reſtricted to any peculiar claſs, but directed to every object of diſtreſs. There was a man, who, travelling from Jeruſalem to Jericho, fell among thieves: he was ſpoiled, he was wounded.—The prieſt paſſed by,—he who attended at the altar of God, he that ſhould have poſſeſſed a ſpirit of univerſal charity. The prieſt paſſed by,—the Levite followed his example, untouched with the feelings of humanity; his heart was contracted, perhaps, by the prejudices of a party, which he had conceived to be religion. But a Samaritan paſſed that way: he looked upon the man with that ſympathy and compaſſion which the love of Chriſt inſpires towards

wards a brother in diſtreſs, incapable of relieving himſelf, upon whom many ſufferings were brought, and many more expected to follow. He takes compaſſion of this poor Jew, pours oil and wine into his wounds, attempts to alleviate his grief by leſſening its cauſe; and, though he could have no expectation of compenſation, yet it did not reſtrain him from attempting every thing in his power for the relief of this indigent perſon, and his views were not confined to the preſent time; he looked forward, and endeavoured to provide for his future well-being, giving a direction unto his hoſt, *I will repay thee.* It was therefore the want of this ſympathy, together with the ſpirit of pride, which prompted the rich man to purſue the luſts of the fleſh, of the eye, and the pride of life, at the expence of his ſocial and religious duties, which rendered him highly criminal. This appears clearly to have been deſigned: the character of this *certain rich man* and that of the beggar formed a contraſt. The rich

man wanted virtue; the poor man was deſtitute of food; it is evident, however, that he was in a humble ſtate. What could he have aſked leſs if he had aſked any thing? The ſeverity of hunger forced him to aſk thus much of him, as he was incapable of helping himſelf. He deſired only the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, but he was unnoticed. If he had been of the rich, if there had been a proſpect that the intereſt, or the pleaſure, of the rich man could have been augmented by relieving him, he would have noticed him as Laban did Abraham's ſervant when he ſaw the bracelets on his ſiſter's hands, *Come in, thou bleſſed of the Lord, wherefore ſtandeſt thou without?* the door would have been readily opened to opulence, and titular dignity would have found an eaſy acceſs; but the poor beggar lay unnoticed: the inferior ſpecies of animals ſeemed to feel more ſympathy than the rich man, *Moreover the dogs came and licked his ſores.* I would not be underſtood, by any thing that I have ſaid,

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to attempt an ingenious apology for the rich; but, at the ſame time, I would attempt to make that diſtinction between the poverty of the heart and the poſſeſſions of the hands which the author of the Chriſtian religion deſigned. In the courſe of the providence of Almighty God it ſo falleth out, that the efforts of the laborious and induſtrious are not crowned with equal ſucceſs. But we are not to conclude that the perſon, whoſe barns are filled with plenty, and whoſe preſſes are ready to burſt *with new wine*, is the diſtinguiſhed favourite of heaven, any more than that the poor man, who divides his morſel with his family, and mixes his tears with his bread, is reprobated by heaven. It is the abuſe, and not the uſe, of riches which the teſtimony of Chriſt is certainly againſt. The apoſtles did not enjoin the rich to throw away their riches, but he exhorts Timothy to *charge them, who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded*, that they aſſume nothing on the ſcore of their poſſeſſions; *charge the*

rich of this world that they be not high-minded, neither truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. This is what he had in charge, adding, I think, that *we brought nothing with us into the world, and we ſhall carry nothing out of it. Naked we came into the world, naked we ſhall return*, be diſſolved and mixed with thoſe elements, from which we originally ſprang. I would, therefore, attempt, at leaſt, that we ſhould individually reflect upon the circumſtances that we are placed in, and that we ſhould receive with gratitude the portion which, in the general courſe of God's providence, ſhall be allotted to us. Nothing more is required of us than to be *good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God.* We are called ſtewards; and a time approaches, with unavoidable certainty, when the Lord of the univerſe will call us, will ſummon us hence, with *give thou an account of thy ſtewardſhip, for thou ſhalt be no longer ſteward.* Let us therefore conſider the ſeveral talents we have received for the improvement

provement of our hearts in the Chriſtian life: let us conſider the outward benefits that are beſtowed upon us, and let it be the ſtudy of our lives to apply them properly, and to reſemble the good Samaritan; that, in imitating the example of the author of the Chriſtian religion, it may be the delight of our lives to diffuſe happineſs all around, and to go *about doing good.* This appears to be of indiſpenſible obligation. If the rich man had poſſeſſed this friendly diſpoſition, the beggar would not have been neglected at the gates of his houſe, the dogs would not have been ſuffered to lick his ſores; he would have poured into them lenient balm; he would have attempted to bind up his broken heart, and to *wipe away all tears from all faces,* to diffuſe happineſs in as extenſive a manner as his abilities could qualify him to diffuſe it, and therein he would have been the beſt prepared to join the heavenly ſociety above, when a period ſhould have been put to his exiſtence upon earth, and his poſſeſſions could no

longer avail him. But this was not the circumſtance of the rich man; he wanted *bowels of compaſſion*; and, therefore, whatever religious party he was connected with, whether of the Phariſees or of the Sadducees, he was not acceptable in the ſight of the Searcher of hearts. Let us now reflect a little on what his feelings muſt be,—the feelings of a man that has rolled along in pomp, that has been clad *in purple and fine linen*, that has had his *ſinging men* and his *ſinging women*, with the ſound of the pipe and of the tabret, to attune his heart to joy, yet deſtitute of the feelings of humanity and of worthy ſentiments of religion. Death approaches,—he ſees the *heavens paſſing away as a ſcroll*, and the very foundation of his happineſs diſſolved. I cannot better expreſs it than in the language of the holy ſcriptures: *When in his proſperity, the deſtroyer came upon him; his purpoſes were cut off, even the thoughts of his heart and the deſire of his eyes; but his day is turned into night, his light into darkneſs; his harp is turned into mourning,*

mourning, and his organ into the voice of them that weep. He is about to quit this ſcene of things without any hope or expectation of entering upon any ſcene that is better. He looks back upon a life that has been ſpent in various ſpecies of diſſipation, in the gratification of his ſenſual appetites, and in the neglect of every ſocial duty. He now finds himſelf in a circumſtance far beneath the poor beggar's that lay at his gate.—Conſcience reſumes the ſeat ſhe had loſt,—wounds that had been healed break out afreſh, and bleed anguiſh. He looks back, but it gives him no pleaſure; the picture excites the moſt painful feelings. He looks forward, but he has no hope; his *ſinging men* and his *ſinging women*, with the voice of the pipe and the tabret, can no more inſpire his ſoul with joy. He is about to quit this mortal ſtage, and to enter into the world of ſpirits, but deſtitute of thoſe moral virtues that would have qualified him to join the celeſtial ſociety, and to take a part in the general feſtivity which

prevails throughout heaven's empire. The rich man lifted up his eyes to heaven in a ſtate of anguiſh; he beheld the beggar in Abraham's boſom. We are not to conſider this text literally: this is a parable, not a matter of fact; and a parable deſigned to illuſtrate the moral doctrine of the goſpel of Chriſt. He reaped the fruit of his doings, that which will inevitably follow a courſe of diſſipation and a neglect of our proper duties: *The recompence of his hands* will be rendered to every man. *To thoſe, who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil: of the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile; for, there is no reſpect of perſons with God:* and I wiſh to God there were leſs reſpect of perſons with men. This was the circumſtance, as I conceive, of the rich man.—Let us now conſider what might be the feelings and the hopes of the poor beggar. Deſpiſed of his brethren, unpitied, unrelieved, he lay at the gates of the rich man; the

the dogs licked his wounds :—he importuned charity, — but he importuned in vain. The rich man's ear was deaf to his prayers. What conſolation could he have in this ſtate ! Indeed, his feelings muſt have been exquiſite. Hunger and thirſt are appetites, which, in the extreme, throw the mind into tumult. His natural feelings were painful, but what were his proſpects ! What were his hopes ! Though he was poor, he was not forſaken of his Maker : he could not boaſt of *purple and fine linen*, he attended not the tables of the rich, nor partook of their luxurious banquets, yet he was the offspring of the eternal Father, who made of *one blood all the nations of men who dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the bounds of their habitation.* If the earth was unpropitious to his prayers, ſtill heaven was open to his cries. The Sovereign of the univerſe, who regards the *crying of the poor and the ſupplication of the needy*, took compaſſion on the poor beggar. He was about to quit his rags, to quit his poverty,

verty, and to enter into a ſtate of everlaſting happineſs,—he was *carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom.* Which of thoſe circumſtances was the moſt deſirable! Let us extend our views beyond the preſent ſcene of things: let us anticipate the ſhock we cannot ſhun. Which would you rather ſuſtain, the character of this poor beggar, or the character of *this certain rich man?* Would you loſe the hopes of the beggar in order to ſuſtain the dignity of the rich man? This, methinks, is a queſtion which common ſenſe would not be long in deciding upon; but, ſuch is the weakneſs and frailty of our nature, that we approve the right, and yet purſue the wrong: we do the thing that we would not, and neglect that which we would, do. The paſſions of human nature are exceedingly ſtrong, and there is ſome one that generally characteriſes every perſon; a kind of reigning paſſion, which like Aaron's rod, ſwallows up all the reſt. We are not all purſuing one path of vanity, for its paths are endleſs: but we have an aptitude,

aptitude, we have a promptneſs, rather to purſue meaſures that may produce a temporal good than thoſe which will produce a ſpiritual good. The gratification of the preſent moment engages our paſſions. If we were to form an idea by the general practice of mankind, we ſeem to forget that we are mortal, and that we muſt die. Mankind buſy themſelves often beſide their proper buſineſs; and, whilſt they are enlarging the boundaries of their earthly inheritance, are but little ſolicitous to obtain a habitation in the *new heavens and in the new earth, wherein righteouſneſs dwells*. They prefer preſent to everlaſting good, and neglect to cultivate thoſe virtues which would make them reſemble the Deity, (if I may be allowed the expreſſion,) expand the faculties of the ſoul, and make it more capable of thoſe ſublime contemplations which are the employment of the celeſtial choir. I wiſh, therefore, that we might be induced to reflect on the vanity of human wiſhes, and on the folly of human purſuits. We have

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no continuing city here: perfect felicity is no more to be found in this mutable ſtate of things than it was practicable for the Babel builders to erect an edifice that ſhould reach the heavens. Many have ſoared aloft, and built their neſts on high, as upon the cedar of Lebanon, yet they have been brought down. Death levels all diſtinctions, and earthly poſſeſſions make no difference in the grave: let us ſet our affections therefore upon things that are above, and not on things which are beneath. If our affections be placed upon the ſuperior good, we ſhall feel gradually a leſs attachment to things that are ſeen; — leſs to this world, the faſhion whereof is paſſing away, and we are paſſing away with it. Its pleaſures are but as a cloud, or a vapour, which will ſoon diſappear. We are haſtening to the place of our deſtination, let us therefore *run with patience the race that is ſet before us*, imitating the example of the wife and virtuous of all generations, endeavouring to fulfil the various obligations that we are under

under to the Author of our being and one to another ;—to adopt the phraſe in the parable, that we *may be carried by angels into Abraham's boſom*, and enter into the fulneſs of that joy of which we have here but a foretaſte, as of the *brook that is by the way*.

Perhaps ſome preſent, in the hours of their ſolitude, may reflect, that they paſs unnoticed amidſt the throng, while others ſuſtain the plaudit of the people. Let them conſider, that, in a few days, there will be an end put to their anxieties: if they be virtuous, indeed, they are deſtined for the regions of glory, immortality, and eternal life,—regions of which we can at preſent form no adequate idea. We ſee but *darkly, as through a glaſs*,—we explore but a little of that vaſt plan of the providential government of the ſupreme Being ; yet, in a future ſtate, with faculties better diſpoſed, with minds properly prepared, it may be a part of our employment to inveſtigate the diſpenſations of divine providence, which at preſent appear exceedingly myſterious ;

myſterious;—to celebrate, in a future world, the wonderful diſplay of wiſdom and power in the conſtitution of this, and alſo the goodneſs of God in adapting all his diſpenſations to all his people for the accompliſhment of their ſupreme good; and, from a principle of conviction, to join the heavenly hoſt in ſaying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: juſt and true are all thy ways, thou King of ſaints.* I am encouraged to expect this from the ſaying of Chriſt, that *what I do, thou knoweſt not now, but ſhalt know hereafter*; therefore, let not the poor be diſconſolate in their habitations of poverty, but let them attempt, in their reſpective ſtations, to fill up the duties of their day, and they ſhall end in peace everlaſting. I intend not by what I have ſaid that I have any perſon in view who is wanting in charity and benevolence; by no means: my deſign is general. I commend that good and virtuous diſpoſition which has been apparent in many whom I am addreſſing; and I wiſh they may perſevere in that

that which is right, and that they may endeavour *to lay up for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come.* Riches are attended with many ſnares, and ſo is poverty: that poverty, which brings a man to want the neceſſaries of life, will require uncommon fortitude and patience to bear. There are indeed ſnares in every ſtate. Every ſtate is a ſtate of probation, and there are temptations excited in our minds which correſpond with the ſtate and circumſtances that we are in, and to the ſeveral biaſſes that we poſſeſs. Let us therefore *lay aſide every weight and burden, and the ſin which eaſily beſets us, and run with patience the race that is ſet before us,* cheriſhing, in the firſt inſtance, a ſincere love of the ſupreme Being in the higheſt degree, and then the love of our neighbour as ourſelves, that we may poſſeſs a ſpirit of univerſal benevolence, which will prompt us to do all the good we can to that family of which the Lord God Almighty is the Father and Head. I conceive, indeed, that religion and virtue allow

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of degrees in love. There are peculiar attachments which ariſe from conſanguinity, and alſo from affinity, which religion has no controverſies with. We read, in the character of our Lord, that, notwithſtanding he poſſeſſed a *love of all* his diſciples, and of all the inhabitants of the earth, yet John ſeemed to be diſtinguiſhed: *he leaned upon his boſom*, he was the diſciple whom Jeſus loved; but we are not hence to conclude that he loved no other; but there was a peculiar attachment to the *diſciple whom Jeſus loved.*

I would recommend, in attempting every ſtep of reformation, and in every good word and work, that we attend to, and wait for, the influence of the holy Spirit; that which would ſanctify us, that which would gradually inform our underſtandings, remove our prejudices and our doubts, inſpire us with the moſt ſubſtantial hopes, and open to us proſpects that are the moſt pleaſing; and, whatever portion of ill may be allotted us in the courſe of divine providence, let the virtuous ever bear

bear in remembrance that *there is a river, the ſtreams whereof make glad the heritage of God*; and every ſincere devoted ſoul, of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that fears God and works righteouſneſs, is part of this heritage, which is repleniſhed with the ſhowers of immortal goodneſs, and is as a *garden incloſed*, notwithſtanding the different circumſtance of individuals. The whole of this heritage is incloſed with walls that are impregnable, — impregnable againſt the enemy. They will be preſerved, by the providence of Almighty God, as in a garden that is incloſed, — a garden that will be refreſhed with the deſcent of celeſtial rain, that will be repleniſhed, and bring forth the acceptable fruits of virtue and holineſs. *My ſoul*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *thirſteth for God*; *yea, for the living God*; and again, *As the heart panteth for the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God!* This is the diſpoſition of the humble ſoul, who looks upon the Lord as his ſuperior good, and prefers a communion with him

to the *increaſe of corn, wine, or oil.* He will, by every method, endeavour to keep open a communication with this fountain, — a fountain that will never be exhauſted. Thanks be to God *we have a river*: though we may be expoſed to many things, to the darkneſs and light, the heat and the cold, yet, in the courſe of our pilgrimage, there is a river that flows from Hermon's hills, the ſtreams whereof ever make glad the heritage of God.

Let us attempt to paſs along this river that we may be repleniſhed, ſo ſhall we experience that which is ſpoken of Wiſdom, *my brook became a river, and my river became a ſea.* The good, the virtuous, man; the man, that feels the emotions of filial piety, has recourſe to this river. A brook is opened to him by the way, at which he can ſatiate his thirſt, and renew his ſtrength. He will, in waiting upon God, *mount up as on wings of an eagle, he will walk, and not be weary; run, and not be faint.* Thanks be to God that we have this river, and I wiſh

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we may diſtinguiſh this *fountain of living water* from the *broken ciſterns that can hold no water*. If this be the caſe with our hearts, then we ſhall find our conſolation enlarge, our hopes increaſe till they are loſt in fruition, and our faith terminate in open viſion, in the contemplation of thoſe truths of which we can at preſent form but inadequate ideas, when we ſhall enter into the joy of our Lord, and be numbered with the wiſe. *They that are wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs as the ſtars for ever and ever!*

THE

PRAYER

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST Gracious God, inſpire our hearts with ſuitable reverence, that we may approach thee acceptably, and offer up our prayers to thee in full aſſurance that, though heaven is thy throne, and the earth thy footſtool, yet thou art graciouſly pleaſed to notice the inhabitants of this lower

lower world, as well as thoſe who are clothed with the greateſt degree of dignity, and are perfectly happy in a world that is infinitely ſuperior. Impreſs our hearts with a ſenſe of thy goodneſs, upon which we every moment depend. Let it be manifeſted unto us, that the diſpenſing of thy manifold grace ſhould impreſs us with emotions of filial piety and gratitude unto thee, who art the ſource of every thing that is good. We approach thy altar in the multitude of thy mercies, and look in confidence towards thee, that, notwithſtanding our many infirmities, *there is mercy with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared.* Grant, we beſeech thee, that, by the operation of thy holy Spirit, thou everlaſting Shepherd and Biſhop of ſouls, multitudes may be gathered out of the wilderneſs, in which they have wandered and been loſt, within thy fold, to become a part of thy flock, and the ſheep of thy paſture. Be pleaſed, in mercy, to bring back every ſheep that has ſtrayed unto the fold again, that, as we are thine by

creation, we may, at length, be thine by adoption into a ſtate of ſonſhip, and become heirs of a ſpiritual inheritance, the crown immortal, that ſhall never fade away.

O moſt righteous and everlaſting Father, be pleaſed, we humbly beſeech thee, to look down upon the various circumſtances of thy people; conſole the poor, and abate the pride of the rich, that we may, by the interpoſition of thy ſpirit, be what thou wouldſt have us to be, a humble dependent people, looking up unto thee as the ſource whence all our bleſſings are derived, and imploring at thy throne to be inſtructed to uſe our talents to the ends and purpoſes for which thou haſt given them, that, when ever thou ſhalt be pleaſed to ſummon us hence, we may have an evidence, a hope, as an anchor that is moſt ſure and ſtedfaſt, that may preſerve our ſouls in tranquillity when the waves of affliction roar, when the winds of adverſity may blow upon us from every quarter. In the moſt painful diſpenſations

ſations we may have to paſs through, grant that we may find an aſylum in thy name, which has been the tower of defence, the munition of rocks, to the righteous in all generations.

O Lord, enable us to call ſucceſsfully upon thy name, that we may be ſaved with an everlaſting ſalvation; that, fortified by thy grace, we may endure the dangers of proſperity, and alſo the trials of poverty, if they ſhall be permitted to attend us; that we may not be elevated too high, nor puffed up to deny thee, and ſay, who is the Lord? nor may be ever ſo caſt down and oppreſſed in adverſity, as to ſteal, and take thy name in vain, to deny thee, O God; but that, in every diſpenſation of thy providence, we may humbly acquieſce with thy will, and ſay, *Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done.*

Grant, we beſeech thee, that, under an awful ſenſe of thy attributes, which it is not in the power of human beings adequately to conceive, nor of the tongues of an-

gels to expreſs, in the contemplation of thy attributes, our ſouls, inflamed with a ſpirit of pure devotion, may aſcend up, and put up our ſupplications, to thee, O Lord. We feel a holy awe pervade our ſouls: in the contemplation of thy attributes our words are ſwallowed up: we offer unto thee the increaſe of praiſe, and aſcribe unto thee every thing that is excellent, every thing that is great: to thee belong majeſty and dominion, with every other adorable attribute, now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE III.

THERE is part of a pſalm, or hymn, compoſed by a ſervant of God, which has been revived, in my remembrance, in this meeting; and I may ſay, in much ſincerity, it hath been the language of my heart: *Offer unto God thankſgiving.*

The deſign of the author of this pſalm was, to excite, both in himſelf and in the minds of others, the moſt fervent emotions of gratitude, thankſgiving, and praiſe. Thankſgiving, if it be more than the cold formality

formality of unmeaning words, is the genuine offspring of gratitude and devotion. It ariſes from a juſt ſenſe of the manifold favours beſtowed upon us by the providence of God, who hath liberally ſupplied his creatures with the proviſion neceſſary for them.

The Scriptures ſpeak of the Almighty not only as watching over, and providing for, the ſuperior claſs of beings in this world, but as extending his providential care (to uſe a comparative mode of ſpeech) to the meaneſt of his creatures. Not a ſparrow falls without him: he heareth the young ravens when they cry, and he hath provided richly for the ſoul of every living thing. Man, in a peculiar manner, appears to be diſtinguiſhed above all other claſſes of animal exiſtence by a rational power of reflection. He is capable of aſcending from effect to cauſe, of obſerving the concatenation thereof, and of inferring, from the phænomena of nature, the exiſtence of a wiſe, powerful, intelligent, and good, Being

ing, whom we call God. Hence he becomes an accountable creature : hence he has a motive to thankſgiving and praiſe, of which the lower orders of animals are not capable ; for, whatever ſimilarity there may be between the endowments of inferior animals, and their inſtinctive powers, and the faculties of the human ſpecies, yet hiſtory affords us no inſtance of the former betraying the leaſt ſigns of devotion. Man is made a little, and perhaps but a little, lower than the angels. He is capable of contemplating the attributes of the ſupreme Cauſe ; and who can contemplate the attributes of the divine Being without feeling the emotions of filial fear and gratitude ? But it is exceedingly to be regretted, that we uſe not thoſe ſuperior powers, with which we are endued to the nobleſt purpoſes, for which they were given us. We employ too little of the ſhort ſpan of time in the inveſtigation of ſubjects which are adapted to inſpire us with the beſt affections, and to acquire thoſe virtues that would

would dignify our nature: but, inſtead thereof, we deſcend from the rank we ſhould fill, and, with inferior orders of animals, make paſſion, inſtead of right reaſon, our guide and ruler. Thus we become governed by thoſe ſenſual appetites which we ſhould govern. We give away the power received for the nobleſt purpoſes, or make it ſubſervient to our loweſt paſſions; and, like thoſe animals which are fed by fruit which drops ſpontaneouſly from the trees, ſome people ſeem deſtitute of reflection whence their proviſion is derived, ſeldom look up, ſeldom, if ever, contemplate the cauſe, ſeldom reflect *that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof, with the cattle on a thouſand hills*, and that we are every moment dependent on his bounty. This is the unhappy circumſtance of too many of the ſons and daughters of men.

I apprehend the principal deſign of all Goſpel miniſters is, to excite in the minds of their hearers ſuch reflections, on beings circumſtanced

circumſtanced as we are, and on the relation we bear one to another and to the ſupreme Cauſe, as may be productive of filial piety, prompt us to make our hearts the ſacred altar of the Lord Almighty, and *offer unto God thankſgiving* and praiſe.

I fervently wiſh that all our hearts may be at this ſeaſon, and not only at this ſeaſon but at all other times, ſo impreſſed with the infinite obligation we are under to the ſupreme Being, that thankſgiving might become an habitual frame of ſpirit, continued throughout all the occurrences of life, ſetting the Lord always before our eyes that we do not evil or offend him. Ingratitude, it ſeems, actuated the children of Iſrael. It hath been the principal cauſe, or ſource, of all moral evil. Thus, the people of the houſe of Iſrael received the favours of heaven without turning their thoughts reverently toward the ſource whence they were derived: *they ate and drank, and roſe up to play.*

Inſtead

Inſtead of being diſpoſed to thankſgiving, they indulged a ſpirit of levity. They rioted on the divine bounty, and forgot to give thanks: they wanted, therefore, a proper motive to the diſcharge of their ſeveral duties; for, when we are impreſſed with a proper ſenſe of gratitude for favours received, we are naturally diſpoſed to ſearch for, or ſtudy, the will and pleaſure of the perſon who conferred on us thoſe favours. We carefully watch for an opportunity to expreſs our gratitude, not only in being verbally thankful, but are alſo ſtudious to avoid every thing that would furniſh occaſion of offence to our benefactor; and, on the other hand, are equally ſtudious to render ourſelves, as much as poſſible, worthy objects of his favourable regard. Thus it is in ſocial life among men, and ſimilar thereto it is with thoſe minds which are impreſſed with a ſenſe of gratitude to the ſupreme Being. The conſideration of his goodneſs ſhould lead us to reflect on our own unworthineſs; for, we are indeed *unworthy*

worthy of the leaſt of his mercies, and of his truth; yet he has favoured us with the former and the latter rain, the upper and the nether ſprings; with ſeed-time and with harveſt; has filled our barns with plenty, and hath liberally provided for the ſuſtenance of his creatures. Impreſſed with the ſenſe which this obligation impoſes, the grateful heart would approach his altar in the multitude of his mercies, and ſay, *What ſhall we render unto thee for thy goodneſs to the children of men?*

This is the language of the devoted heart; and, though it might be uttered only mentally, or not be expreſſed by any vocal ſound, yet the Searcher of hearts would accept that affection, or devotion of mind. He accepts the intention of the heart before it is brought forth, or manifeſted by any external act, and we ſhall then have the moſt powerful motive to hope for the divine aid. Were our hearts thus impreſſed, we ſhould embrace every opportunity of enquiring how we ſhould commend

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ourſelves to his notice, — how expreſs the gratitude we feel. We ſhould be induced to manifeſt it by a diſcharge of every religious and of every ſocial duty, by waiting upon and worſhipping him, by offering to him the pure incenſe of thankſgiving and praiſe, expreſſing what we feel for the favours received, by communicating, in proportion to our reſpective meaſures, to thoſe who ſtand in need of aſſiſtance; and, indeed, impreſſed with the emotions of gratitude to God, it will be the chief pleaſure of our lives to *go about doing good* among men. But of thoſe, who are deſtitute of this moſt worthy principle of gratitude, other joys allure the affections, other motives than religious and ſocial duties. They are in purſuit of ſome favourite ſenſual object, which, at beſt, compared with the ſuperior good, is only an unſubſtantial phantom, and purſued at the expence of every thing that confers real dignity on a rational

rational being, and renders him acceptable to the Judge of all the earth.

Thus the children of Iſrael, in proportion as they loſt ſight of the providence of the Almighty, and of what he had done for them, became more and more depraved; inſomuch, that they joined ſome of the ſurrounding nations in the performance of idolatrous acts. They ſeemed to have loſt the idea of the unity of God: they became deſtitute of a ſpirit of gratitude. The prophet, in the name of the Lord, degrades them beneath the condition of the moſt contemptible claſſes of animals: *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! for, the Lord hath ſpoken, the ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib, but Iſrael doth not know, my people doth not conſider.* If theſe animals are not capable of rational reflection, yet they poſſeſs ſomething that bears a reſemblance of gratitude, diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of *inſtinct.* They, at leaſt, expreſs ſome notice of thoſe on whom they depend for ſupport: *the ox*

knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib. This paſſage ſets forth the great moral depravity of that people; and, in ſhort, the hiſtory, which the holy Scriptures furniſh us with reſpecting the children of Iſrael, conveys a charge of peculiar ignorance, obſtinacy, and ingratitude: *The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib; but Iſrael doth not know, my people doth not conſider. Ah, ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers!* In another place, the prophet hath ſhewn, that, in departing from what they ſhould have been, in forſaking the God of their fathers, for want of a reverent attention to his ſtatutes, they loſt the ſpirit of devotion, and judgements were inflicted on them by extraordinary cauſes. They deprived themſelves of the felicity that is infinitely ſuperior to all the gratifications of ſenſual appetites. *My people have committed two evils; they have forſaken me, the Fountain of living waters, and have hewn to themſelves ciſterns, broken ciſterns, which can hold no water.* Here

again

again they are indirectly charged with ingratitude. To use the figurative language of the holy Scriptures, *he spread a table for them in the wilderness*, conducted them by a *cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night*, put them into possession of *vineyards which were not theirs, and of olive-yards which they had not planted*, yet they were ungrateful; they ceased to *offer unto God thanksgiving*; that is to say, the species of thanksgiving which is acceptable to the supreme Being. They made, indeed, many prayers; they spread forth their hands toward the habitation of his holiness; the services of the tabernacle were punctually performed; but, with all these, they possessed not a spirit of thanksgiving, but offered unto God a mere form of words, sentiments in which the heart took no part, which had not been dictated by a spirit of gratitude. They offered, therefore, the *sacrifice of fools*. Such is the weakness of our nature, that we would persuade ourselves, were it possible, that the Almighty possesses the vanity and ambition

of a creature who is fond of the incenſe of adulation, and capable of being deceived by the offerings of flattery, in which the heart is not intereſted; but, as he is without the parts, ſo he is without the paſſions, of a creature. No weakneſs is to be attributed to him, who is perfect and ſelf-ſufficient. He can derive no additional felicity from our thankſgiving: he can experience no diminution from our withholding him the praiſe which is due to his great and excellent name. He has inſtituted worſhip, and commanded thankſgiving, for our ſakes, to promote our felicity, and not his own. Can we ſuppoſe, that, approaching him with words compoſed by way of prayer and thankſgiving, in which the heart is not intereſted, can be acceptable to him? No: and therefore their new moons, the calling of their aſſemblies, and their many prayers, were not acceptable incenſe to the Lord God of Sabaoth. They had *committed two evils: they had forſaken him, the Fountain of living waters, and had hewn*

hewn unto themſelves ciſterns, broken ciſterns, which could hold no water. Therein is ſet forth the great loſs that people ſuſtained when they departed in heart from that reverent attention which they ſhould have paid to the ſupreme Being while they were partakers of his favours and mercies; the great loſs they ſuſtained by forſaking the everlaſting Fountain of felicity for the mere ſenſual pleaſures of this life, which are not to be compared with the ſpiritual joys that reſult from a ſtate of real devotion and thankſgiving.

There is no ſource of temporal pleaſure but what may ſoon terminate. Diſappointment awaits us in every ſtate. Pains, afflictions, diſeaſes, may ſoon render us incapable of taſting thoſe pleaſures we have long been in the purſuit of; and, after a tedious chaſe, in the moment when we bleſs ourſelves with the expectation of fruition, we graſp the phantom, and find it air. How many inſtances have we ſeen of people, intoxicated with a ſpirit of ambition and ava-

rice, who ſuppoſed that the accumulation of wealth would render them perfectly happy; who have propoſed to themſelves a future period, when they ſhould ſit down at the end of their labours in peace; and have gone on, from one ſtage of life to another, led as it were by an *ignis-fatuus*, to perambulate the enchanted circle! Diſappointment has terminated their purſuits. If we have not ſomething elſe to reſt our hopes upon than the pleaſure which this world can produce, we ſhall be like the man who dreamt that he was hungry, and ate; thirſty, and he drank; but awoke, and beheld his appetites ſtill remained: and this may perhaps conſtitute, in part, the miſery of a future ſtate,—the entering into it with appetites which cannot be gratified.

Having attempted to ſhew the importance of gratitude, and the diſmal conſequences that flow from the contrary principle, I will now attempt, at leaſt, to point out one cauſe why we feel ſo little of this virtuous affection; — that is, Ambition,

tion, the grand enemy of man's felicity. On the wings of imagination, in an extravagant anticipation of the future, man deprives himself of the enjoyment which virtue would yield him in the present hour. *He labours for very vanity, and disquiets himself in vain.* Perhaps we shall find the very seeds of ambition sown as it were, and interwoven, with our very nature and constitution. There is some species of ambition that takes place in the lowest as well as in the highest ranks of society. In our present circumstances, let them be what they may above wanting the necessaries of life, (which is the lot of but very few, comparatively speaking; and, of this few, the evil has been brought upon them principally by their own imprudence and intemperance,) we should be content. A few, indeed, have been subjected to want the necessaries of life by unavoidable events: these are worthy objects of charity, and will not be neglected by those who can feel for another's woe. But, indeed, such is

the want of ſympathy, that ſome people ſeldom ſee an affliction without their own doors. They live for themſelves only, and ſeem as if they were as deſtitute of the love of their neighbour as they are of gratitude to God. But, with reſpect to this paſſion of ambition, againſt which I would in a peculiar manner endeavour to guard the minds of youth, reſiſt it early, or it will grow with your growth, and ſtrengthen with your ſtrength. Guard againſt the errors of libertiniſm, the errors of the ſpendthrift, and the errors of the miſer, that you may early poſſeſs the emotions of gratitude to the Author of your being. If it be your lot to abound in this world's goods, receive the ſuperabundant favours with gratitude, and thankfully apply them to the purpoſes for which they were given. But, ſuch is the nature of this paſſion, (ambition,) that it prompts us to look up to the claſſes of mankind a little above us, and not to the Moſt High. We look among our neighbours, who have acquired

a little more than we have acquired, and are led as it were imperceptibly towards a ſtate we can never attain. I have never known, in the courſe of my obſervation, a perſon, who was not contented in a low ſtate of life, that was ever happier in a higher; but I have known ſome who have been happy in a low ſtation, and, when they have eaten their morſel in quietneſs, have offered unto God thankſgiving and praiſe. Happineſs is tendered to all. Be but grateful, and thou ſhalt be happy; for, gratitude will inſpire us with this ſentiment, *Having food and raiment, be therewith content.*

I make theſe obſervations on the ſubject without premeditation; and, indeed, the want of order in my delivery of them will be a ſufficient proof of it. I recommend them to your ſerious conſideration, and wiſh your hearts may be ſuitably impreſſed with the ſubject. And, though thankſgiving ſhould be our general mental habit, our hearts ſhould be particularly impreſſed with

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it at particular times. We ought to look up with peculiar thankſgiving to the throne of grace in the moment of fruition. We have enjoined no peculiar mode, or form, of prayer or thankſgiving. We have no ceremony by way of grace before and after meat; but, in diſpenſing with theſe forms, we do not diſpenſe with the thing itſelf intended by them. We ought to be impreſſed with filial piety towards our Almighty Father. We ought to make a ſolemn pauſe previous to our partaking of the divine bounty, and to poſſeſs ſuch a ſpirit of devotion, that we may *offer*, at leaſt mentally, *unto God thankſgiving and praiſe.*

And, at the cloſe of the day, though we have no form of evening or morning prayer, yet I would attempt to impreſs the minds of youth eſpecially, that, before they cloſe their eyes to ſleep, they ſhould review the tranſactions of the paſt day, and ſee what there is to approve, what to condemn,—to contemplate the mercy and the goodneſs extended to them, that they may

offer

offer unto God thankſgiving for his mercies, and commend themſelves to his protection. Again, in the morning, we ought alſo to offer up thankſgiving. If we poſſeſs this diſpoſition of mind, we ſhall not be entangled with the things of this life, which enſnare, but ſhall conſider ourſelves as ſtrangers and pilgrims on earth, anticipating a better country, a better inheritance, where, with ſaints and angels, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, in a humble contemplation of the divine attributes, and of the diſpenſations of his providence, and favoured with the renewed impreſſion of his goodneſs, we may, with purified ſpirits, approach him in the multitude of his mercies, and *offer unto him thankſgiving and praiſe!*

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IV.

ARISE, and go hence; for, this is not thy rest! We are abundantly inſtructed in the holy ſcriptures reſpecting the ſhortneſs of human life, the brevity of all terreſtrial pleaſures, and the vanity of all human purſuits, compared with the ſatisfaction which is found in a courſe of virtue, and the glorious hope with which it inſpires its humble votaries of ultimately poſſeſſing

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an inheritance which is incorruptible, and fadeth not away.

It is the worthy purpoſe, or end, of real religion, to ennoble our nature, to raiſe our thoughts and contemplations from carnal to ſpiritual, from terreſtrial to celeſtial, objects. *Set your affections*, ſays the apoſtle, *on things above, not on things on the earth.* If our affections be ſolely placed on things which are beneath, or on the pleaſures derived to us from an intercourſe with the objects of ſenſe, our happineſs, indeed, will be exceedingly ſhort-lived and uncertain. *Here we have no continuing city:* every thing of a terreſtrial nature is mutable. There is not any ſtate or circumſtance of life, however pleaſing, that we can have any ſecurity will continue long.

A tranſition, from a ſtate of opulence to a ſtate of poverty, our own obſervations have inſtructed us, has ſometimes been made very quick. We cannot either foreſee or prevent thoſe occurrences which may be productive in future of proſperity

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or adverſity, of pleaſure or pain. *The faſhion of this world*, ſaith the apoſtle, *paſſeth away*, and we are indeed paſſing with it. Short is the ſpan of human life: ſhort the path we have to tread from the cradle to the grave, the houſe appointed for the reception of all living; for, *duſt thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt return*. Seeing, therefore, *we have no continuing city*, let us form the wiſe reſolution of ſeeking one that is to come; *a city which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God*. I have underſtood by this paſſage of Scripture, which is figurative, that we are called upon, as rational creatures, by the voice of divine wiſdom, ſeeing all the pleaſures, or ſatisfactions, which ariſe from an intercourſe with ſenſible objects, muſt terminate, to endeavour, by the beſt uſe or application of thoſe powers, which heaven has endued us with, to ſeek that ſpecies of happineſs which will be permanent, and is adapted to the nature of a rational and an immortal ſpirit. This is the comment which I have made on this

paſſage

paſſage of holy writ: and I do moſt fervently wiſh that our minds may be diſpoſed at this ſeaſon ſeriouſly to reflect on the comparative folly of all ſenſual indulgences, and on the vanity of human purſuits; and be animated to ſeek the ſuperior good, a habitation in the *city of the ſaints ſolemnities, a city that hath foundations. Look*, ſaith the text, *upon Zion, the city of our ſolemnities, and thine eyes ſhall ſee Jeruſalem a quiet habitation; not one of its ſtakes ſhall ever be removed, nor any of its cords be broken:* there the *glorious Lord* is to its inhabitants as *a place of broad rivers and ſtreams.* He is the ſource whence their happineſs is derived; and, as he is immortal, the happineſs, derived from an intercourſe or communion with him will conſequently be permanent. We are inſtructed by what means we are to ſeek ſucceſsfully this *city that hath foundations.* We are told, in the Revelations, in words ſomewhat of this import, Bleſſed is he who keepeth the commandments of God: he ſhall have acceſs to the tree of life, which ſtands

ſtands in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God, ſhall enter in through the gates into the city, and become a fellow-citizen with the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God. Here we learn, that, if we would poſſeſs a habitation in this city, we muſt ſeek it by walking in the commandments. Again, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* There is no other way to become an inhabitant of this city than by obedience to the ſacred commandments of heaven, which are of univerſal obligation. Let us not, therefore, expect to climb up any other way, or to attain a ſtate of felicity hereafter, by any other mode than obedience from the heart to the manifeſtations of the divine will; and, with reſpect to the commandments of God, we are alſo inſtructed by what means they are to be aſcertained; at leaſt, by individuals for themſelves: *a manifeſtation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.* It is called *light*, becauſe it hath a property which is analogous to that element. It illuminates the underſtandings

of mankind, by inſtructing them in matters of the greateſt importance,—matters which reſpect their final acceptance with the Judge of the whole earth at the laſt day.

But, though the light ſhines, or *a manifeſtation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*, yet there are, comparatively ſpeaking, but few who attend to its dictates, and purſue that courſe of virtue which the light of the goſpel of Jeſus evidently points out. It is with many as it was with the multitude when our Lord was perſonally on earth. *Light*, ſays he, *is come into the world, but men love darkneſs rather than light*. He came, a divine meſſenger of heaven, to propoſe the terms of reconciliation to fallen creatures. He came to enlighten their underſtandings, to correct the depravity of their hearts, to purify them, and to make them meet for an *inheritance which is incorruptible, and fadeth not away*. He came to reveal to them the way which leads to this glorious city; but they

they turned a deaf ear to the inſtructions of wiſdom: they would not attend to his counſel, nor be admoniſhed by his reproofs. *Light is come into the world, but men love darkneſs rather than light. They hate the light, neither come to the light, leſt their deeds ſhould be reproved.*

Perhaps, if we review our lives; if we look into the book of conſcience, we ſhall find ſomething recorded there which bears a reſemblance, more or leſs, to the circumſtance of thoſe people in the days of our Lord's perſonal appearance on earth. There is not a being, arrived to years capable of ſerious reflection, who hath not had ſome ſecret convictions for doing wrong; who hath not had ſome compunction of conſcience for having tranſgreſſed the laws and ſtatutes of heaven. But, as the pointing of the ſacred finger leads to things contrary to the wiſh of the ſenſual heart, immerſed in pleaſures derived from terreſtrial purſuits, we are not diſpoſed to attend to the inſtruction of the ſacred monitor.

We are rather diſpoſed to be flattered in our vices, to be ſoothed in our ſins, than to have them corrected, and to be led into the juſt man's path, *which is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

There is a circumſtance on record concerning an ancient king, which may ſerve, perhaps, to illuſtrate the doctrine which I have in view to aſſert. He was about to lead out his army to battle, and was doubtful of the event of his intended enterpriſe. He was deſirous, if poſſible, to know what ſhould be the deciſion of the day; and, for that purpoſe, he intended to conſult ſome ſeer; but he meant ſome perſon who ſhould be capable of flattering his vanity and wiſhes. A prophet of the Lord was propoſed to him,—one who had never acted the part of a ſycophant, but had ſpoken the word of the Lord faithfully: — but he was not diſpoſed to conſult this prophet. That, indeed, which would have recommended him to every judicious perſon, was the cauſe of

of his refuſing to conſult him. He knew he would not attempt to ſooth his vanity, propheſy ſmooth things, or ſpeak deceit: therefore he determined not to conſult him. *I hate him, for he doth not propheſy good concerning me, but evil.* And thus, with reſpect to the divine monitor, the manifeſtation of the grace of God in the human heart, which bears a faithful teſtimony to our conſciences; we are not diſpoſed to attend to its dictates, but we call upon our paſſions to ſooth us, to flatter us, and to concur with our vain hopes, and, by this means, have neglected things which are of the greateſt importance. We are rather deſirous that we may be indulged in the purſuit of lying vanities, than to have our eyes effectually opened to ſee our own nakedneſs, the depravity of our hearts, and the way which leads to Zion. *I hate him; for, he doth not ſpeak good concerning me, but evil.* Thus mankind hate the reproofs of the divine light in their own conſciences, becauſe it teſtifies againſt their darling paſ-

ſions, and thwarts them in their pleaſing purſuits; intercepts their long-indulged proſpects, and points out to them a road, the purſuit of which would afford them no pleaſure though it leads to Zion. Their thoughts are engroſſed by inferior objects; they have no taſte, or reliſh, for things which are of a ſpiritual nature, but would, if it were poſſible, take up their reſt in tranſient gratifications, and not be ſolicitous with reſpect to the concluſion of the ſcene, or what ſhall be their circumſtance, or ſtate, in the world, or life, which is to come.

They hate the light: why ſo? becauſe it manifeſts their deeds of darkneſs. They do not like to take a view of their own hearts. Such is the depravity thereof, that a view of it is indeed humiliating to the pride of human nature. They had rather draw a veil over their ſins than ſee them in their proper colours, as they really are; or purſue ſuch meaſures of conduct as would ennoble their nature, rectify their judge-

judgements, and open to them proſpects far more inviting than what this world can afford, even the proſpect of an everlaſting habitation *in the new heaven and the new earth, wherein righteouſneſs dwells.*

But, though I am led to ſpeak after this manner, I have no doubt that there are many in this audience who have weighed the worth of vanity, and eſtimated the inſignificancy of all terreſtrial things; who have ſeen that they are not adapted to ſatiate the thirſt of an immortal ſpirit. They have contemplated, and have gathered from their own obſervations, that every thing is mutable;— that the finger of Omnipotence hath written on the face of univerſal nature, *They ſhall periſh.* They have gathered, I ſay, from their own obſervations, that every thing, included in this ſyſtem, is mutable; and that, in a ſhort time, a period will be put to their exiſtence on earth, when their connection with all ſublunary objects will be diſſolved for ever. Under ſuch a proſpect of the uncer-

tainty of terreſtrial pleaſures, they have been animated to *ſeek a city which hath foundations*; or, in other words, have been excited, by the pureſt motives, to purſue thoſe means which will introduce that happineſs into the ſoul which is not dependent on any elementary or ſecondary cauſes, but on an union of ſoul with the Author of its being; and have choſen, if it ſhould be their lot in the courſe of the providence of divine wiſdom, to *ſuffer rather affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a ſeaſon.* I ſalute theſe with the ſalvation of the love of the goſpel of Chriſt. Theſe are *ſeeking a city which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God*; and their hope will not be as the *hope of the hypocrite, which will periſh*, but a hope that will terminate in an everlaſting fruition of joys, which eye *hath not ſeen, nor hath ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Bleſſed are they who keep the commandments of God: they will have acceſs to the tree of life, which ſtands in the*

the midſt of the Paradiſe of God, and ſhall enter in through the gates into the city,—become fellow-citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God. For, having been redeemed from the bondage of corruption, they ſhall enjoy the glorious liberty of the ſons of God; they ſhall enter into the city of the ſaints ſolemnities, the inhabitants whereof ſhall never complain that they are ſick. Indeed, it affords the moſt enlivening ſpecies of hope, to them that ſeek this city, that, when the clouds ſhall gather blackneſs, darkneſs, and tempeſt, — when the proſpect of the future ſhall be exceedingly gloomy,—they can penetrate this gloom, and anticipate an everlaſting habitation in purer ſkies, *in the new heaven and in the new earth, wherein righteouſneſs dwells.* I wiſh, friends, we may be effectually animated by the conſideration of theſe things: that, ſeeing every thing is uncertain, and that we may be deprived of the choiceſt of terreſtrial bleſſings in an unexpected hour, let us *ſeek a city that hath foundations, and*

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lay up for ourſelves a good foundation againſt the time which is to come.

It is, indeed, to be acknowledged, with reverent gratitude and praiſe, that many are the bleſſings we have received in the courſe of God's providence; and we ought to receive them in a humble becoming manner,—in a manner becoming dependent beings, who have nothing which they have not received, and to uſe, or apply, them to the purpoſe for which they were given. But we are not to reſt ſatisfied in thoſe enjoyments which are to be derived merely from an intercourſe with terreſtrial objects. *Ariſe, and go hence; this is not thy reſt! But there is a reſt prepared for the people of God;* and that reſt is to be attained by a reverent attention to his commandments. This is the conſtant doctrine of the holy Scriptures, both in the old and in the new Teſtament: let us, therefore, ſtudy the will of heaven reſpecting us; and let it be our conſtant concern to recommend ourſelves to the Author of our being, by manifeſting the

the love, we feel or poſſeſs for him, in a reverent attention to his ſtatutes and his commandments. Were our hearts thus diſpoſed heaven-ward to ſeek the ſuperior good, we ſhould be able to join with the royal pſalmiſt in ſaying, *My ſoul thirſteth for God, for the living God!* Again, *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God!* A contemplation of the divine law, to thoſe who love it, would open a ſource of the moſt exalted pleaſure, and they would indeed ſay with the pſalmiſt, *Thy ſtatutes are my ſongs in the houſe of my pilgrimage.* Now I underſtand, by *ſongs* in the text, that they were the chief, or principal, objects of his affections; that they were inſcribed on the tablet of his heart, as well as written on the poſts of his doors. They were the ſubjects of his meditation when he lay down and when he roſe up.

May it pleaſe the Author of all good ſo to inſpire our hearts with a noble contempt of all ſenſual indulgences, as that we may purſue

purſue thoſe things which are moſt excellent; and, ſeeing the inſufficiency of all terreſtrial ſcenes to communicate to us permanent felicity, we may ſet our affections on things which are above, and, by a courſe of practical virtue and obedience, lay up for ourſelves treaſure in heaven, where the moth nor ruſt cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through, and ſteal. Then ſhall we ultimately attain that reſt which is prepared for the people of God, in which there is fulneſs of joy!

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE V.

THERE is a paſſage of holy writ which hath engaged my ſerious meditation. You will find it, on ſacred record, in words to this purport :

If thine own heart condemn thee not, then haſt thou confidence towards God; by which I have underſtood, thou haſt confidence, and a humble expectation of the divine bleſſing, and that thou ſhalt be accepted of the Judge of the whole earth in the day of judgement, the day of final deciſion.

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The apoſtle alſo ſays, *But, if thine own heart condemn thee, remember that God is greater, and knoweth all things*; by which I have underſtood, that, if we ſtand condemned at the tribunal of our own hearts, we ſhall not be approved of him, who looketh not as man looketh, but looketh at the heart.

I conceive, however, that this paſſage is not to be admitted without ſome exception; for, it is poſſible that ſome people may have digreſſed ſo widely from the paths of truth and virtue, and ſunk ſo deeply into the loweſt ſpecies of ſenſuality, as to have their underſtandings clouded, and perceive not the propriety and the excellency of virtue. Their conſciences are become *ſeared as with a hot iron.* Reiterated tranſgreſſion of the divine law renders the heart, as it were, in ſome degree, callous, and it loſes that delicate moral ſenſibility diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of conſcience. On the other hand, ſome pious well-diſpoſed people, afflicted perhaps by ſome ſpecies of natural diſeaſe,

diſeaſe, have let in, and cheriſhed, groundleſs fears and apprehenſions, have thought themſelves ſo morally depraved and polluted, that, though ſome of them ſeem to be the beſt of mankind, we may have obſerved them to have been brought to the confines of the horrible pit of deſpair. Theſe may, I think, be conſidered as exceptions to this general rule of the apoſtle.

Now I conceive the apoſtle intended to this purport; that, whoever wiſhes to receive the beſt information reſpecting the duties which he owes to his Maker and to his fellow-creatures, and purſues thoſe means of inſtruction which he apprehends will be the moſt conducive to obtain it, and who conforms his life, his manners, and his converſation, agreeably to that knowledge which he has received, as he will not be condemned of his own heart, but have the teſtimony of a *conſcience void of offence towards God and towards man*, ſo he will be approved of his Maker, and approved of the wiſe, the diſcerning, and the good, of all

all ranks and denominations of men. On the contrary, the man who wilfully acts againſt the ſober dictates of his judgement, will of courſe (unleſs he becomes indeed a reprobate) feel the teſtimony of his own conſcience againſt him. Perhaps this moral ſenſibility may not always attend him. In his convivial hours,—hours that are ſet apart for the gratification of merely ſenſual appetites, — hours that are paſſed in unholy delights, in rioting and *drunkenneſs, in chambering and wantonneſs*, he may not be ſuſceptible of the impreſſions of conſcience; yet, in the moments of his receſs, when he retires from the pleaſing and deluſive ſcenes of vanity, in the moments of cool reflection, he will feel the teſtimony of his own conſcience, which may prompt him to act in a manner ſimilar to that of our great primogenitor, who, in the calm evening of the day, remembered the tranſgreſſion of the morn, felt the reproaches of his own conſcience, and attempted to hide himſelf from the all-penetrating eye of the Lord of

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the univerſe. *Adam, where art thou?* He hid himſelf among the trees of the garden; and thus it is with us, or has been, more or leſs, with us all. We firſt tranſgreſſed, and then ſought to hide our tranſgreſſion; for, it is my firm opinion, that, if mankind were as heartily concerned to reform their evil practices as they are to conceal them, the work of reformation would ſoon be more ſtriking and apparent amongſt the ſeveral ranks and claſſes of mankind.

Whoever has the teſtimony of his conſcience againſt him will have no ſolid foundation of hope, or expectation, of being approved of him whoſe laws he has tranſgreſſed, whoſe ſtatutes he has violated.

I wiſh, my friends, we might be all ſuitably impreſſed with the importance of this ſubject. It is of all others the moſt intereſting to us,—*a good conſcience.*

But it is exceedingly to be regretted that this ſpecies of good, this ſpecies of riches,

is too ſeldom the object of our purſuit. In this world, we are as a gueſt that tarrieth but for half an hour. In a ſhort time, thoſe who poſſeſs goodly inheritances muſt leave them to their children or heirs. Generation ſucceeds to generation very quickly. Were we, therefore, to poſſeſs all the riches of this world; were we to be made proprietors of the world itſelf, under the anticipation of that ſolemn period when we ſhall be about to quit this terreſtrial ſphere, what is it that a man would not *give in exchange for his ſoul!* What is it he would not part with, were it in the power of his diſpoſal, for the teſtimony of a *good conſcience*, to give him a humble confidence towards God, that the future ſtate he is juſt entering upon ſhall be within the confines of the general aſſembly of the juſt and purified ſpirits, who, in the fruition of eternal joy, receive the *end of their faith*, even the *ſalvation of their ſouls!*

I beſeech you, my friends, in the love of the goſpel of Chriſt, that ye *walk wiſely*, that

that ye be *circumſpect*, that ye ſtudy, in the firſt place, your reſpective duties, that you be prompted by the pureſt and worthieſt motives to act agreeably with the information you have received, that ſo you may poſſeſs this ineſtimable bleſſing, a *good conſcience*, or a *conſcience void of offence both towards God and towards man.*

This is that ſpecies of treaſure which we are exhorted to *lay up for ourſelves in heaven, in bags that wax not old, where the moth and the ruſt cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and ſteal.* This is the ſpecies of riches, and the only ſpecies of riches, which the craft and violence of others cannot wreſt from us; for, it is ſecured beyond the power of plunder: it is ſecured in a man's own heart, over which his neighbour can have no controul. But, whatever elſe he poſſeſſes, he may, in the courſe of divine providence, be ſtripped of. He may loſe his fair inheritance; it may be tranſlated to the hands of others by events which human wiſdom could not foreſee, nor hu-

man prudence prevent. He may be ſtripped of all his property, and be brought to penury and want; but the teſtimony of a good conſcience cannot be taken from a man: it muſt be given away, — it muſt be voluntarily parted with, by a tranſgreſſion of thoſe dictates which may be called the law of conſcience. Therefore let us lay up for ourſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come.

But I am aware of an objection which, perhaps, may be made. It is this: the excellency of a good conſcience is univerſally admitted; but where is the man who poſſeſſes this ineſtimable treaſure? Where is the man who can lay his hand upon his heart, and ſay, that it *condemns him not?* Upon a review of the actions of his life, and the influencing motives of his conduct, where is the man who can lay his hand upon his heart, and pronounce himſelf immaculate?

I believe there is not ſuch a man exiſting; that is to ſay, a man that doth not ſin,

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or hath not aforetime ſinned ; *for, all have ſinned, and fallen ſhort of the glory of God,* and of courſe have forfeited thoſe glorious privileges which were poſſeſſed by our primogenitors in their paradiſiacal ſtate, before they tranſgreſſed the divine law. We have ſinned, and fallen ſhort of the glory of God ; but we are abundantly inſtructed, both in the old and new Teſtament, that the Author of our being *willeth not the death of the ſinner*,— that he willeth not the deſtruction of creatures which he hath formed capable of eternal life. He is not diſpoſed, at all events, to conſign them to the realms of irremediable woe and miſery, but has manifeſted himſelf towards his creatures in the character not only of a juſt, but alſo of a merciful and gracious, being ; a being who compaſſionates the infirmities, the weakneſſes, and wanderings, of his creatures, and who hath provided a means for the redemption of mankind from ſin, and, of courſe, from miſery : — that means is Jeſus Chriſt, the mediator of the

new covenant, the high-prieſt of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, conſtituted, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endleſs life, who remaineth a prieſt for ever. *It is a faithful ſaying, and it is worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners*; not to ſave them in their ſins, but to ſave them from their ſins, to cleanſe them from all unrighteouſneſs, to reſtore unto his creatures the glorious liberty of the ſons of God, and, of conſequence, a good conſcience: *Wherefore*, ſays the apoſtle, *we truſt we have a good conſcience.*

This is the great and glorious purpoſe of the manifeſtation of the Son of God, that, notwithſtanding we have ſinned, and fallen ſhort of his glory; that we all, as ſheep, have gone aſtray from the ſheepfold, and have wandered in the wilderneſs of this world, yet, if *we confeſs our ſins, God is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs*; by which I underſtand, that the office of the mediator

tor is not only to be the means of the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God, but that his office alſo is to cleanſe and ſanctify the penitent ſoul,—to *cleanſe it from all unrighteouſneſs*, and, of courſe, it will have a good conſcience, and have confidence towards God. Now theſe are general propoſitions, to which we all accede. Offers of mercy are held out to us through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, and our conſciences will moſt certainly condemn us unleſs we attempt to apply thoſe offers, to apply thoſe healing qualities, unto ourſelves. The teſtimony of our conſciences will ſtand againſt us if we neglect this great ſalvation, which is offered to us through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. I beſeech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, (than which there is nothing, perhaps, more likely to influence the ſenſible and judicious part of mankind, who open their eyes, and view the vaſt extent of the divine empire;—who contemplate the phænomena of nature, and the ſeveral means that the Au-

thor of nature has taken for the conſervation of all the ſpecies of his creatures, *I beſeech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,) that you preſent your bodies a living ſacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reaſonable ſervice.* But there is no ſacrifice that can be offered upon the altar of God, there is no prayer whatever which claims the notice of the Lord God of Sabaoth, which is not the offspring of a humble, of a devoted, heart, ſenſible of its weakneſs, ſenſible of its unworthineſs, and of a purity of intention to apply thoſe means for its redemption, and to purſue thoſe methods, for the future, which ſhall receive the teſtimony of conſcience, and the recompence of the juſt at the laſt day.

Let it, then, be the firſt object of our attention to ſeek a good conſcience. Let us think every thing elſe but as droſs and as dung. Every acquiſition we may make within the compaſs of the creation, bears no proportion to the bleſſing of a good conſcience; for, poſſeſſing this, a man has peace

peace at home. Whatever tumults may arise, whatever winds may blow, whatever afflictions may surround him, these will but play round his head; they cannot reach his heart; for, *the good man shall be satisfied from himself.* He will have a source of satisfaction in himself, which will dissipate every gloom,—a satisfaction the sensual are strangers to. He will look beyond the confines of time, and expect a habitation *in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness dwells.* Though men should look upon his life to be without use, and his end without honour, yet he will be approved of God, and the lot of his inheritance will be with the saints. But, if a man does not possess the testimony of his own conscience, he cannot be happy in any circumstance of life. Wherever he goes, his conscience will attend him; and, even in the house of banqueting, he will sometimes, as it were, see a hand-writing on the wall, *Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting.* If he come to the greatest honour and preferment,

preferment, ſtill he will be like Cain; and, having a bad conſcience, may be doomed to compaſs the earth without being able to make a happy ſettlement in any part of it. He has no peace in himſelf: he is ſeeking for that without, which muſt be found (if ever it be found) within, him; for, if a man be completely ſatisfied, it muſt be from himſelf: (it muſt not, however, be conſidered as the effect of his moral conduct, apart from Jeſus Chriſt; it muſt proceed from that pure ſtate which is termed, in the ſacred writings, *regeneration.)* His affections muſt be tranſlated from creaturely objects to the Creator. They muſt be ſet, not on things beneath, but on things which are above, and then it will become the object of his purſuit, to lay up treaſure in heaven; and, where the treaſure is, there will the heart be alſo.

But, let it not be imagined that that is peculiar to an inhabitant above the ſtars. Let it not be imagined that he muſt aſcend to the heights above to feel the joys of the com-

community, or ſociety, of purified ſpirits; for, the juſt upon earth, and the glorified in heaven, participate of the ſame eternal Fountain of mercy, goodneſs, and truth: they are repleniſhed at the ſame immortal Fountain of mercy and goodneſs; — a Fountain, that can never be drawn dry, —a Fountain, at which the righteous of all denominations have drunk. They have been refreſhed with thoſe ſtreams which interſect this vale of tears; and, as they have paſſed along, they have experienced a growth in grace, and in the ſaving knowledge of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. They have enjoyed a foretaſte of that ſpecies of felicity *which eye hath not ſeen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man*, unregenerate man, *to conceive*. This is written for all that ſhall be joined to the ſociety of the juſt; not to any tribe or nation in particular, but to people of all names and tongues that *fear God and work righteouſneſs*, whoſe hearts

hearts condemn them not, who poſſeſs the teſtimony of a good conſcience.

We are told, that the kingdom of heaven is within us; and our Lord, forewarning his diſciples concerning the deceivers of the enſuing times, who ſhould ſay, *Lo, here is Chriſt*, and *lo, there is Chriſt!* cautions them, ſaying, go not forth after them: the kingdom of heaven, ſays he, is within you. And, in another place, it is defined to be righteouſneſs, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghoſt. Then, wherever there is the beauty of righteouſneſs, wherever there is that moral rectitude which is conſonant to the law of God, there is the kingdom of heaven,—there is the temple of the Holy Ghoſt; and, thus ſanctified in the name of the Moſt High, the veſſel bears the inſcription of *Holineſs to the Lord! The kingdom of heaven is within you.* Let us be concerned to experience that rectitude of heart, that converſion of ſoul, which will qualify us to enjoy the incomes of the Holy Spirit,— that will

will qualify us to have *communion with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt.*

I commend theſe obſervations to your ſerious conſideration, beſeeching you, my friends, let it be the firſt object of your ſtudy to attain and keep a good conſcience. If we are conſcious of having ſinned, let us implore the interpoſition of the divine mercy; let us be proſtrate at the footſtool of the throne of divine grace; let us attempt to feel thoſe affections, thoſe penitential affections, that will prompt us to enter into the temple of the Moſt High, in a diſpoſition of mind ſuitable to the occaſion, and ſimilar to that of the poor publican. We have nothing that we can boaſt of. Indeed, the moſt exalted among men have nothing to boaſt of in the ſight of God. After we have diſcharged our obligations, we are *unprofitable ſervants.* We are unprofitable to him, and have nothing to claim upon the ſcore of merit, becauſe we have done nothing but what was our duty.

Let

Let us, impreſſed, therefore, with theſe motives, *lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and run with patience the race that is ſet before us.* Let it be *the juſt man's path*, to which the eye of our mind may be allured, and our feet be turned, which is *as a ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.* That, as we paſs along, and as we grow in years, we may grow in grace, we may grow in favour with the common Father of us all: that, when our natural ſun may be on the decline, and nearly ſet, whether we are in the meridian or evening of old age, we may have a proſpect of immortality; and, having our ſun ſet in an unclouded horizon, it may be to us the glorious preſage of an eternal fair day.

I commend us to God, and to a humble attention to the manifeſtation of that Spirit *which he hath given to every man to profit withal*, and which is adapted to the proper information of our judgements, to ſtrengthen our virtuous reſolutions, to guide us by its counſels through the wilderneſs of this world,

world, and eſtabliſh us in the realms of glory, where, *with ſaints and angels, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, we may celebrate the praiſes of the Author of our being. Thus, if we act wiſely, and wiſh to poſſeſs a good conſcience, we ſhall be tranſlated to that ſphere where *the wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they, that turn many unto righteouſneſs, as the ſtars, for ever and ever!*

PRAYER

PRAYER

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST gracious Creator, it is of thine infinite mercy that thou deigneſt to hear our prayers, or takeſt the leaſt favourable notice of us; for, we have all, as loſt ſheep, gone aſtray: we have ſinned, and forſaken thy ſtatutes, as our fathers have done. We are, therefore, unworthy of the leaſt of thy mercies and grace, yet thou art pleaſed to encourage us to approach thy ſacred altar, to humble

ble ourſelves before thee, and to offer up our ſupplications unto thee, the common Father of us all. Though heaven be thy throne, and the earth thy footſtool, yet thou not only heareſt, but hearkeneſt, to the voice of the prayer of thy creatures. The prayer of any, and every, penitent ſoul penetrates the heavens, and reaches thee. O moſt holy and merciful God, impreſs us, at this ſeaſon, we humbly beſeech thee, with ſuitable affections of ſoul to enter into thy houſe of prayer, and lift up our hearts with our hands to the habitation of thy holineſs, ſenſible, moſt holy God, of thy infinite purity, and of that impurity which we have contracted by the tranſgreſſion of thy law. We implore the extenſion of thy mercy, through Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, and that thou wouldſt be pleaſed effectually to cleanſe and ſanctify us, through the operation of thy holy Spirit, before we ſhall go hence, and be no more ſeen; that, having a hope of immortality, we may be enabled,

by the aid of thy Spirit, to paſs the time of our ſojourning here in fear, and, being concerned above all things to retain in our poſſeſſion the teſtimony of a good conſcience, we may be accepted of the Judge of the whole earth at the laſt day; that, in a ſolemn view of thy greatneſs, our ſouls may be humbled, that, under the influence of thy holy Spirit, we may offer up to thee the incenſe of thankſgiving and praiſe, aſcribing to thee might, majeſty, and glory, dominion, and every other excellent attribute with which thou art ſurrounded, now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VI.

WITHOUT Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God; for, he that cometh unto God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.

The revival of this paſſage of holy writ, in my remembrance, hath been the means of exciting and fixing my attention upon the ſubject of faith.

It cannot, I conceive, have eſcaped the obſervation of any perſon, who is arrived at years of underſtanding, and is converſant

with the holy Scriptures, that the ſame word *faith* hath divers acceptations: that, in ſome places, it intends not only a belief in the exiſtence of an infinitely wiſe, powerful, and intelligent, Being, who is a rewarder of them who diligently ſeek him; but alſo an affiance, or truſt, in ſeaſons of adverſity and probation, in that Being who has all power in heaven and earth, whoſe power is uncontroulable, who doeth whatſoever pleaſeth him in the armies of heaven and amongſt the inhabitants of the earth. — The word *faith* is alſo uſed to diſtinguiſh between the different diſpenſations; to point out the glorious diſpenſation of the Goſpel of Chriſt, which is called the *law of faith*, and to contradiſtinguiſh it from the Moſaic diſpenſation, which is called the *law of works*; and I conceive, that, wherever any of the writers of the New Teſtament ſpeak of the inſignificancy of works, with reſpect to the rendering a man acceptable to the Author of his being, the works of the law, or, to uſe the apoſtle's

expreſſion,

expreſſion, the deeds of the law, by which no fleſh living can be juſtified, are intended. The rituals of the legal diſpenſation are not of a nature to be truſted in. Our Saviour, in his perſon, fulfilled the obligation of that law, and was the end of that law for righteouſneſs ſake. It is therefore written, that he has taken away the hand-writing of ordinances, and nailed them to his croſs, which muſt reſpect the rituals of the Moſaic diſpenſation.

Some people, whom I need not uncharitably cenſure, have, I conceive, entertained a miſtaken notion reſpecting the nature of that faith which is effectual, through Chriſt, to the ſalvation of the ſoul. They have apprehended, that a belief in the exiſtence of the ſupreme Being, and a belief in Jeſus Chriſt, whom God has ſent, is of itſelf ſufficient, and, unto whomſoever this faith is given, they are to be deemed of the number of the choſen few, whom God predeſtinated from everlaſting unto eternal life; and that this faith, apart from the

conſideration of works, is ſufficient unto ſalvation :——but to me it appears, on the moſt ſerious inveſtigation of the Holy Scriptures, that, as without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God, ſo with faith it is poſſible to diſpleaſe him. This is a propoſition which I conceive might be proved from divers parts of the New Teſtament eſpecially; more particularly where we are told of people, who, after they knew God, (it implies that he was manifeſted unto them,) after they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh hearts became darkened. They glorified him not as God, that is, they brought not forth thoſe good fruits, by which it is ſaid, that our Father who is in heaven is glorified; for, herein, ſays our Lord, is my heavenly Father glorified, in that ye bring forth much fruit; by which undoubtedly the fruits of the Spirit are intended, joy, peace, love, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, and faith. — It is poſſible that a man may be convinced

convinced with reſpect to the truth of certain propoſitions received upon the authority, the divine authority, of him who propoſes them, and yet may act in direct contradiction to the obligation of thoſe laws. Now we are in divers places inſtructed reſpecting the eſſentiality of faith; that it is a lively operating principle of the judgement, which hath a moral influence upon a man's actions; not a mere barren ſpeculative faith; but a faith that worketh by love, — to what? to the purifying of the conſcience from all dead works, to ſerve the living God, not in the oldneſs of the letter, but in the newneſs of the Spirit, and with life; and, leſt the primitive Chriſtians ſhould entertain a miſtaken notion of the efficacy of faith in the abſtract, and ſhould reſt their hopes of ſalvation upon their ſubſcription to certain articles of faith, though thoſe articles be founded upon the baſis of immutable truth, the apoſtle takes occaſion to inſtruct them that faith without works is dead: Thinkeſt thou, O vain

man, that faith can ſave thee? the very devils (ſays he) believe, the very devils believe, and they alſo tremble; for, as the body without the ſoul is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo; and he propoſed a teſt, a teſt of ſaving faith, which is eaſy and obvious, and ought to be more conſulted than it is by the ſeveral claſſes and ſocieties of religious profeſſors: Shew me (ſays he) thy faith without thy works, and I will ſhew thee my faith by my works, for, the tree is to be denominated by its fruit: *by their fruits you ſhall know them.* The true believer is diſtinguiſhed from the practical infidel by his fruits; he brings forth fruits meet for repentance; he adds, to his faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kindneſs, charity: and, if theſe things (ſays the apoſtle) be in you, and abound, they ſhall make you that ye ſhall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the ſaving knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. *Shew me thy faith*

faith without thy works; a man may have the cleareſt conception of truth without reducing this theory into practice in his own perſon. To apprehend the right is one thing; to conform ourſelves to the rule of right, in our lives and in our manners, is another thing; therefore it ſeems, to me, beyond the leaſt degree of doubt, that ſomething more than a ſpeculative belief, or a faith in certain propoſitions, is neceſſary to render us acceptable to the ſupreme Being, and to qualify us for an inheritance among the ſaints in light, to be heirs of God, and co-heirs with Chriſt. And I wiſh, as it is a matter of infinite importance to us all, that we, agreeable to the advice of the apoſtle to the members of the primitive church, might examine ourſelves whether we are in the faith: *Prove your own ſelves; know ye not yourſelves how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you unleſs ye be reprobates?* Let us not content ourſelves, that we are the deſcendants of reputed Chriſtian parents, that we have been made acquainted with the

contents

contents of the ſacred hiſtory of the old and of the new Teſtament; let us not reſt ſatisfied merely with a profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion in theory, but let us alſo be concerned to act conſiſtently with the nature and obligation of that holy religion which Jeſus Chriſt was ſent of the Father to promote among the ſons and daughters of men.

The obligations and the Chriſtian duties enjoined in the New Teſtament are adapted at once to better our condition in this world, to make us happier in our ſhort pilgrimage through it, and alſo to ſecure to us everlaſting felicity in the world which is to come. Let us not forget that our Lord ſays, *It is not every one that ſays, Lord, Lord, that ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven.* And again our Lord inſtructs us thus: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

By good works, I mean a conformity of the will and of the powers of the mind to that

that law or rule of action, which is of God given unto man, to illuminate his paths in this world, and guide him by his counsel to the participation of the realms of eternal glory; and as the power of obedience is derived from him, the Author of all that is excellent and good, as he is the giver of every good and perfect gift, so that power is given unto us, through Jesus Christ, by which we are capable of discharging our several obligations. I say, it being the gift of God, and not inherent in the creature, we ascribe all unto him, who is the efficient cause of all holiness and virtue in every part of his vastly-extended empire; for, it is God that works in us to do according to his own good pleasure, which pleasure is, that we should walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, seeing that the days are evil; that we (to use the language of the apostle) should be *careful to maintain good works*, which *are good and profitable unto men.* I pretend not that they are profitable unto God; but they are profitable

profitable unto men; and godlineſs (which implies the obligation of practical duties, as well as ſtedfaſtly believing) is profitable for all things, having the promiſe of the life that now is, and alſo of that which is to come; but I may ſay, in the language of one formerly on this ſubject, with reſpect to the ſupreme Being, who is perfect, ſelf-ſufficient, and can receive nothing from his creatures, to whom he has communicated every thing, *If thou be righteous, what giveſt thou him, or what receiveth he of thine hand? thy wickedneſs may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteouſneſs may profit the children of men.* It is for this purpoſe, this noble, this diſintereſted, purpoſe, that the Almighty has eſtabliſhed a law to his creatures, not for his own profit, but for theirs. Hence it is ſaid, that the ſabbath was made for man, and not man for the ſabbath.

In the wiſdom and ſupreme goodneſs of the Creator, the obligation of Chriſtian duties, in all circumſtances, is adapted to the nature and capacity of his creatures, to promote

promote righteouſneſs through all the ranks and claſſes of ſociety; and, were but our obedience proportionate to our knowledge, did we act conſiſtently with the dictates of our judgement and the dictates of our faith, we might hope to ſee the revival of that ſtate, *when the morning ſtars ſang together, and the ſons of God ſhouted for joy.*

Examine yourſelves, whether you are in the faith; for, we are abundantly inſtructed, as I have already obſerved, that the faith that is ſaving is productive of good works; and it is the beſt and ſureſt teſt whereby to try whether a man has a ſaving or only a ſpeculative faith, as the tree is to be known by his fruits; for men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thiſtles. Therefore that profeſſor of the Chriſtian religion, the tenor of whoſe actions gives the lie to his profeſſion; that profeſſor gives a manifeſtation that he has only a traditional religion, a traditional zeal, and a traditional faith, like the people of the Jews, who expreſſed a veneration for the

temple

temple of the moſt high God, and the rituals of the legal diſpenſation, and cried, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are theſe.* But the prophet ſaid, *Truſt ye not in lying words, ſaying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord; but amend your ways and your doings.*

Many and glorious are the privileges that are to be enjoyed by the believer, ſuch a perſon as I have attempted to deſcribe, who not only believes in the infinitely ſupreme and powerful Being; in the manifeſtation of his Son; in the hiſtory of his life, of his death, of his reſurrection, of his aſcenſion into glory, and in the principles and doctrines which he propagated; but who manifeſts that he has a faith that worketh by love, the tendency of which is to purify the conſcience from dead works, to cleanſe it from all unrighteouſneſs, that the ſoul of man may become the temple of the Holy Ghoſt. —— Great and glorious privileges are to be enjoyed by thoſe few,

by

by thoſe of whatever religious ſociety, who are partakers of true ſaving faith; for, it is worthy of being noted, that the Author of the Chriſtian religion is of no party, but the friend of all; that his grace, like the rays of the ſun, is extended to all, from ſea to ſea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth; inſomuch that we are told in the Scriptures, that the Goſpel is preached in every creature under heaven; that all have heard, though all have not obeyed.

Thoſe, that are true believers, are of that ſtock and family unto whom it was ſaid, *Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleaſure to give you the kingdom. I am*, ſays our Lord, *the reſurrection and the life; he, that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live, and he, that liveth and believeth on me, ſhall never die.* We muſt note, on this paſſage, that here, as well as in many other places in the New and in the Old Teſtament, we are not to take the ſenſe of the Holy Ghoſt in a merely literal acceptation,

becauſe

becauſe this would be to admit of a doctrine contrary to the nature of things, and contrary to fact. For inſtance, the dead are incapable of belief or diſbelief, literally ſpeaking; they are ſilent in the grave, and therefore are incapable of faith; it therefore muſt intend thoſe who are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, aliens to the commonwealth of Iſrael, ſtrangers to the promiſes of the Goſpel of Chriſt, loſt and ſunk in a ſea of ſenſuality: theſe are they to whom the voice of the Son of God is extended, and thoſe that hear may yet live; they may awake unto righteouſneſs, and ſin not. *Whoſoever, therefore, believes in me*, that is to ſay, who receives me in the name of him that ſent me, who embraces the doctrine I preach, who ſubmits to the influence of the Holy Spirit given to them of me from the Father, thoſe who become obedient to the word that I teach, *though he were dead, yet ſhall he live*; he ſhall be brought to live a life of righteouſneſs, he will bring forth the fruit of righteouſneſs, and

and the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect ſhall be quietneſs and aſſurance for ever: and *he, that liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die:* this is not, and cannot, be true in a literal ſenſe; for, we ſee that death happens to the righteous and to the wicked, to him that ſacrificeth as well as to him that ſacrificeth not; it muſt therefore be intended in a ſpiritual ſenſe; he, that liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die, ſhall never participate of that future woe and miſery deſcribed under the character of the ſecond death; he ſhall be redeemed from the bondage of ſpiritual death, and reſtored into *the glorious liberty of the ſons of God*; he ſhall live a life of righteouſneſs here, he ſhall enjoy ſpiritual communion with the Author of his being, he ſhall have fellowſhip with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt; and, after the diſſolution of this body, he ſhall be uſhered into the realms of eternal life, he ſhall be united with the aſſembly of the juſt, the

church of the firſt-born triumphant in glory.

Examine yourſelves, whether you are in the faith. Let not us, as a people, any more than others, preſume upon the profeſſion of a belief in certain Scripture-doctrines, or in the profeſſion of certain articles of faith; but let us always remember, that, if ever we are capable of ſuſtaining the dignity of ſaints in heaven, we muſt live the life of the juſt upon the earth; we muſt purſue the juſt man's way, *which is as a ſhining light, which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

The obligation to practical religion, which I have attempted to impreſs upon the minds of this auditory, is yet more ſtrongly enforced, by the Author of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, at the cloſe of that moſt excellent ſermon which he preached on the mount. After having opened the heavenly treaſures of doctrine, he concludes with ſaying, *If any man heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doeth them not, he ſhall be likened to a fooliſh*

a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. This is the case of the merely nominal Christian; he heareth, believeth, or assenteth to the doctrines of the Gospel of Christ; *if any man heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, he shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof.* On the contrary, he describes the man who indeed possesses saving faith, the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; the man who will receive, at the close of his labours beneath the sun, the end of his faith, even the everlasting salvation of his soul: *if any man heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, because it was* fixed upon an immutable basis; for, it was *founded upon a rock.* This man builds upon that rock,

againſt which the gates of hell can never prevail.

God Almighty grant, that of his infinite mercy and goodneſs we may examine the foundation we are building upon, whether the hopes and expectations we have, of being ſaved with an everlaſting ſalvation, be founded upon a ſpeculative faith, or upon ſuch a belief in the ſupreme Being, and in his Son, as may conform us in heart to that law, that rule of action, which the Author of univerſal nature has diſpenſed and given to all the claſſes of intelligent beings.

Examine yourſelves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own ſelves; know ye not your own ſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except you be reprobates? The manifeſtation of the grace of God here intended is in every man, and its deſign is to inſtruct him in that which is right, and to ſtrengthen him in the performance of every virtue. This is the purpoſe of the manifeſtation of that grace which bringeth ſalvation, and which

which is given unto all men, not to a few, to the excluſion of the reſt; but, through the infinite mercy of the ſupreme Being, it is given to all men, and under all deſcriptions, teaching us that, *denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world, looking for the bleſſed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who hath given himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.* — Let us not therefore neglect our own mercies, by neglecting that ſalvation which is offered to us through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Let us be ſerious, let us be inquiſitive, upon a matter of ſo great importance as that upon which our happineſs in the world of ſpirits moſt certainly depends; let us not content ourſelves with the form and ſhow of godlineſs, while we are deſtitute of its life, and of its power and heavenly virtue. May our hearts enter into the nature and ſpirit of true Chriſtian

faith, that by this means we may have acceſs to the Father through the Son, and that in theſe our religious and ſolemn aſſemblies we may poſſeſs that faith by which Abel offered to God a more excellent ſacrifice than Cain; with that faith let us draw near to the temple of the moſt high, let us approach to that altar to which none that ſerve the tabernacle can pretend; let us approach the Author of our being and of all our mercies, that we may be diſpoſed by him, the preparer of the heart, to receive the ſalutary influences of the Holy Ghoſt, and that we may feel ourſelves under the deſcription of thoſe, mentioned in the Old Teſtament, who wait upon the name of the moſt high: though *the youth may faint, and though the young men may utterly fall, yet they that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, they ſhall walk and not faint.*

To conclude, as my mind ſeems to be diſburdened from that which appeared to be my

my duty, and which I have been performing, I truſt in the ability that God giveth, without any kind of premeditation, under the influence of that celeſtial charity, which breathes glory to God in the higheſt, on earth peace, and good will towards men; under that influence, again I would enjoin the exhortation of the apoſtle: *Examine yourſelves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own ſelves; know ye not your own ſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except you be reprobates?*

PRAYER

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST gracious God, the father and fountain of all our mercies, look down from heaven, the habitation of thy holineſs, upon us, thy poor unworthy creatures, and impreſs us with a juſt ſenſe of what we are, and alſo of what thou wouldſt have us to be; that, ſeeing ourſelves as we are ſeen of thee, we may abhor ourſelves in duſt and aſhes, and feel all that penitential contrition that is neceſſary to

to render us the objects of thy mercy; that, on a review of our paſt lives, we may ſee, and ſincerely repent of, the tranſgreſſions we have committed; and, under the influence of thine Holy Spirit, we may reſolve, in the future ſteps of our ſhort pilgrimage, to correct the errors of thoſe that are irrecoverably paſt. O Lord, enable us to apply the means of ſalvation, which thou art granting unto us through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, that we may receive in meekneſs the ingrafted word which is able to ſave our ſouls. O Lord, enlighten our eyes to ſee, and inſpire our hearts to perform, thoſe things which make for our peace, thoſe duties which thou haſt enjoined unto us of indiſpenſable obligation. — Moſt gracious Father, thou knoweſt the temptations with which we are beſet; thou knoweſt the weakneſs of our natural powers, and the ſtrength of thoſe temptations which aſſail us. Send us, therefore, help from thy ſanctuary; ſtrengthen us, O Lord, and impart vigour to every virtuous

reſolution,

reſolution, that we may be enabled to lay aſide every weight and burthen, and the ſin that does moſt eaſily beſet us, and run with patience the race that is ſet before us, in humble faith and confidence in thee, the Creator, the Protector, and the Preſerver, of men; that, through whatever ſcene it may be our lot to paſs, we may feel the ſupport of thine everlaſting arm, that, when we paſs through the valley of the ſhadow of death, we may fear no evil, and, whenever it ſhall pleaſe thee to ſummon us hence, it may be to join the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, where, with ſaints and angels, and with the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, we may ever live to praiſe thy great and excellent name, to aſcribe to thee the greatneſs, dominion, and glory, which belong unto thee, not only now, but henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VII.

AN apoſtle, writing to one of the primitive churches, addreſſed them in this manner or to this purport: *Quench not the Spirit, deſpiſe not propheſying; prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good.*

The writings both of the Old and the New Teſtament abundantly teſtify, that God doth not only reveal himſelf unto his rational creatures in the volume of his works, or the book of nature, in which the attributes, particularly of power and of intelligence, are eminently diſplayed, but that he alſo reveals himſelf unto his rational

tional creatures immediately by his Spirit, which I conceive to be the grand and primary rule or law of action to all ranks and classes of intelligent creatures, and that all other modes of the manifestation of his will are secondary, and subservient to the grand design or purpose thereof.

There is a spirit in man, (a rational capacity, by which he is eminently distinguished from the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven,) *and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him an understanding*. It is very observable, that one of the chosen leaders of the people of Israel, after having solemnly, by way of commemoration, recounted the signal interpositions of divine Power, in the emancipation of that people from under the tyranny of Pharaoh, as one instance of the divine goodness, he saith, *he gave us also his good Spirit to instruct us*. This manifestation of himself by his Spirit, though extraordinarily dispensed to many of the prophets, was more or less the privilege of every individual; and we find

find the royal pſalmiſt frequently alluding to this principle, and rejoicing therein: *The law*, ſays he, *of the Lord, is perfect, converting the ſoul; the teſtimony of the Lord is ſure, making wiſe the ſimple.* The law, which he in this place intended, I conceive to be that law of the ſpirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus, which ſets us free from the law of ſin and death. — A manifeſtation hereof was given even under the former diſpenſation of Moſes; it was the conductor of that people, it was the ſource of their greateſt conſolation; for, they all *drank of that rock that followed them*; *and that rock*, ſaith the apoſtle, *was Chriſt. The law of the Lord*, ſays he, *is perfect*; by which he could not intend the law of rituals peculiar to that diſpenſation, or the ſacrificial rites of the Jewiſh inſtitution; *for, the law*, ſays the apoſtle, *made nothing perfect.* Again he inſtructeth us, that it made not perfect, as appertaining to the conſcience: it is not the blood of bulls or of goats, or the aſhes of an heifer, ſprinkling the unclean, that could

could ſanctify to the purifying of the conſcience; for, *the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did*, which hope is Chriſt.

That he (to wit, David) intended the primary divine law manifeſted by the Spirit of God unto his creatures, is evident from divers other places.— *I delight*, ſays he, *in the law of the Lord*; and again, *bleſſed is the man whoſe delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth meditate day and night; he ſhall be as a tree that is planted by the rivers of waters.* And, that his chief felicity depended on an immediate union or communion with the God of Iſrael, is very evident from that place, where, under the preſſure of his infirmities, and conſcious of the want of ſuperior aid, he breaks forth in this manner: *My ſoul thirſteth for God, yea, for the living God*; again, *as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God.*

Many other paſſages might be produced, from the writings even of the Old Teſtament,

ment, while the Jewiſh tabernacle was yet remaining: but it is more, ſtill more, abundantly teſtified by our Saviour and by his apoſtles. *The manifeſtation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.* — This is that principle of intelligence given us in Jeſus Chriſt, or through Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord, which the apoſtle intended when he ſaid, *quench not the Spirit*; which muſt certainly mean the inward manifeſtation of the Deity to the ſoul, that grace, a meaſure whereof is given to every man to profit withal; and, that it could not mean any written manifeſtation of himſelf, or the Scriptures, which ſome have conceived was intended by the Spirit, (who allege, that the Spirit, or the will, of God being revealed unto holy men immediately, was mediately communicated, through the inſtrumentality of the Scriptures, to the reſt of mankind,) is very evident; for, the canon of the New Teſtament was not not made up till ſome hundreds of years after the writing of this Epiſtle; nor doth it appear, that

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any epiſtles or writings of the evangeliſts were collected or completed even during the lives of the apoſtles. The New Teſtament, therefore, as a book, did not exiſt; but the apoſtle alludes to ſomething that had been received, which I take to be *the manifeſtation of the Spirit, that is given to every man to profit withal.*

This principle of intelligence, this manifeſtation of the divine will, its effects, its properties, and its influence upon the human ſoul, is ſet forth under various figurative modes of expreſſion. It is ſometimes compared unto fire. As it is the property of fire to purify metal and ſeparate heterogeneous matter, ſo the Spirit of God, operating on the ſoul, will thoroughly *purge away its droſs and take away all its tin*; cleanſe the ſoul from all unrighteouſneſs, and of courſe make it a fit habitation of God through the Spirit.— Is not my word, ſaith the Lord, as a fire? as a fire to conſume and deſtroy that part in man which is at enmity with that which is good? — and

therefore

therefore the office of the high prieſt of this diſpenſation is ſet forth, under the ſame figurative mode of expreſſion, by him who was the forerunner of Chriſt, who was the voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, *prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path ſtrait.* He baptized the people, as he ſaid, indeed, with water, unto repentance; but, when he ſpeaks of the miniſtration of Jeſus, which was to ſucceed his, he ſaith: *He, that cometh after me, is mightier than I; whoſe ſhoe-latchet I am not worthy to looſe; he ſhall baptize you with fire.* Now it cannot be conceived that the material element of fire is intended, which would deſtroy men's bodies; for, Jeſus Chriſt came not to deſtroy men's lives, but to ſave them. *He ſhall baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire; whoſe fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, gather his wheat into his garner, and the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.* This Scripture I adduce to ſhew that the effects of the Holy Spirit upon the rational ſoul, the ſoul that

is depraved by the tranſgreſſion of the divine law, and has contracted the defilement of ſin, is analogous to the operation of that element, that is adapted to purify and refine material bodies. Thus it is ſaid, that a man, ſanctified by the influence thereof, ſhall become as pure as gold, yea, more pure than the golden wedge of Ophir. This I take to be the one eſſential baptiſm, the baptiſm of the Holy Ghoſt, which cleanſeth men from all unrighteouſneſs, and which is neceſſary to conſtitute us the proper object of *that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* For, the baptiſm that now ſaves is not an elementary baptiſm; the baptiſm which now ſaves is not the putting away the filth of the fleſh, than which nothing could be more eaſy for a man to effectuate; but, it is that which gives the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, who hath ſaid, *I am the reſurrection and the life; he, who believeth on me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he*

he live; and he, who liveth and believeth on me, ſhall never die.

Quench not the Spirit. The ſimile, or figure, is very well maintained; for, as the property of the Holy Spirit is ſet forth under the metaphorical language of fire, ſo that, which has a tendency to damp its generous ardour, or prevent its influence, is compared to water. In a moral ſenſe, whatever a man does, whatever motion he cheriſhes in his heart of the vicious ſpecies, whatever licence he gives to his paſſions beyond the bounds preſcribed by the divine law, operates as water on a flame; it damps its ardour. And we ſee that thoſe, who deviate from the paths of innocence, go on ſtep by ſtep, by little and little, till they are brought to actions of the moſt criminal nature, deſtructive of their health, deſtructive of their ſouls peace, and which afford them no pleaſure, but a fearful looking for of the juſt judgement of the divine Being who will deal with every man according to his works. I ſay, every deviation

from the path of virtue will have this effect, to quench the ſpirit. Let us, therefore, by every poſſible means, endeavour to cheriſh this divine flame; it is a ſpark ſent from heaven, and it is deſigned to purify us throughout, to make us veſſels holy to the Lord, meet for an inheritance with the ſaints in light, and to celebrate the praiſes of heaven's King for evermore.

Quench not the Spirit. Yield to that monitor, which cautions you againſt even the appearance of evil, which is mercifully given unto man to direct him in his courſe in this world, and eſtabliſh him, happily eſtabliſh him, in the life that is to come, in the poſſeſſion of that ſpecies of felicity, which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart, the unconverted heart, to conceive; but God hath revealed it to us, ſays the apoſtle, by his Spirit; for, the Spirit ſearches all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Quench not the Spirit. Add, to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge,

knowledge, temperance; to temperance, brotherly kindneſs; to brotherly kindneſs, charity. Thus cheriſh the holy flame; yield to the ſalutary influence of the Spirit, that quickeneth to cheriſh in your breaſts every heavenly and every friendly affection. The duty of a Chriſtian, both with reſpect to his Creator and his fellow-creature, is ſet forth to us in the anſwer which our Lord gave to one who aſked him, which is the greateſt commandment? *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength.* This is the firſt and great commandment; and, the tendency of that Spirit which we have received, if we yield to its influence, would animate our affections toward that Being on whom we depend, and by whoſe bleſſings we are ſupported; raiſe our minds to contemplate the inſtances of God's power, righteouſneſs, goodneſs, and truth, manifeſted; and enable us to aſcend, as upon the wings of an eagle, in a meditation on the divine attributes; and inſpire us with

that ſpecies of gratitude which it is not in the power of language to define.

Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength. This is the firſt and great commandment; and this we ſhould be inſtructed to do, if we yielded to the influences of, and did not quench, the Spirit, which is like a fire to enkindle within us a ſacred flame of devotion, in which we may encompaſs the altar of the Almighty, in the multitude of his mercies, and approach acceptably the temple of his holineſs.

Deſpiſe not propheſying. Now it is to be underſtood, that the manifeſtation of the Spirit does not ſuperſede, or render uſeleſs, inſtrumental means. God has uſed both theſe means; he has ſpoken unto our fathers by the prophets; he has ſpoken to us, in theſe latter days, by his Son; he has ſent his apoſtles to go forth, by his authority, in his name, to *preach the Goſpel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, the opening of the priſon*

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to them who were bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God. He appointed ſome prophets, and ſome evangeliſts, and ſome paſtors and teachers, for the edifying of the body in that love by which it is united unto its holy head. Deſpiſe not therefore propheſying.

At the ſame time that we conceive this manifeſtation of the Spirit to be the primary law and rule of our actions, we muſt by no means deſpiſe inſtrumental means of inſtruction. All Scripture is given by the inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works, and is able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith which is of Chriſt Jeſus: we therefore accept the Scriptures as an ineſtimable bleſſing; for, in them we have an account of the various diſpenſations of divine wiſdom, and in which we have the concurrent teſtimony of the apoſ-

tles and prophets of Jeſus Chriſt to this fundamental principle of which we are moſt firmly perſuaded.

Deſpiſe not propheſying. Let us improve, by every means which divine wiſdom lays in the way, that we may be furniſhed to every good word and work, and increaſe in the knowledge of God.

Deſpiſe not propheſying; prove all things; hold faſt that which is good. I conceive that the manifeſtation of the Spirit, given to every man to profit withal, is propoſed to his rational underſtanding, and ſuperſedes not the uſe of thoſe rational powers by which he is diſtinguiſhed; but it qualifies him to exerciſe thoſe powers in the beſt line and to the nobleſt purpoſes, to aſſert the dignity of his nature, and qualify him for thoſe ſpecies of employments which are ſuited to the nature of an immortal ſpirit, made a little lower than the angels. He is to prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good. The Father of lights appeals to the underſtanding and faculties of men; when

when he makes a revelation to his creatures, he mercifully condeſcends to let himſelf down to the faculties they poſſeſs; he ſpeaks to them in a language they underſtand. Therefore *prove all things*; diſtinguiſh properly between things and things in matters of the greateſt importance, thoſe which reſpect our final acceptance with the Judge of the whole earth. There are none that claim more our ſerious attention. They reſpect not only the welfare of our bodies in this world, but alſo the welfare of our ſouls in that eternity, to the confines of which we are nearly approaching. *Let every man, therefore, be fully perſuaded in his own mind*; for, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is ſin. Let us not be content with being the nominal diſciples of Chriſt, but let us conſider ourſelves as capable of judging in thoſe matters that moſt nearly concern us; and, if any lack wiſdom, let him aſk it of him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and it ſhall be given him. If we would

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be inſtructed in matters of everlaſting importance, let us conſult the ſacred oracle, Chriſt, within us, the hope of glory, and who is ſaid to be within every man unleſs he be a reprobate; for, ſays the apoſtle, *examine yourſelves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own ſelves; know ye not yourſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

It ſeems that our Saviour foreſaw the diviſions that would ſoon commence among mankind, and endeavoured to guard his diſciples againſt the dogmas of men, and turn them to ſomething within them as a ſufficient guide and rule of their actions; for, ſays he, ſome will ſay, *lo! here is Chriſt*; *and others*, *lo! there is Chriſt*; he is to be found among the circle of profeſſors; lo! here is Chriſt; others ſay, lo! there is Chriſt; but go not forth after them, for, the kingdom of God is within you. And again, we are told, that that, which is to be known of God, is manifeſt: — where? ſhall we conſult the many commentators on

on the Old and New Teſtament? ſhall we traverſe the earth to ſearch into the opinions and modes of remote antiquity, in order to know what we ſhall do to be ſaved, or in order to know how we ſhall be accepted of God? no: that, which is to be known of God, is manifeſted in man,—within. — Having made theſe obſervations, I recommend them to your conſideration.

Quench not the Spirit; deſpiſe not propheſying; prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good. And may we, individually, according to that light and manifeſtation of the Spirit which is given unto us, be faithful to the revelations communicated to us thereby, ſo that we may have the teſtimony of a good conſcience; and, when we have deviated, let us endeavour to poſſeſs thoſe penitential diſpoſitions, that, through Jeſus Chriſt, we may be accepted of God, and made meet for the realms of glory, where, with the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, we may contemplate

plate the perfections of the divine Being, and may join the celeſtial hoſt in the ſong of Moſes, the ſervant of God, and the ſong of the Lamb, ſaying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints!*

PRAYER

PRAYER

AT THE

CONCLUSION of the MEETING.

MOST gracious Father of all our mercies, unto whom we have acceſs through Jeſus Chriſt, thy Son, impreſs us with a humbling ſenſe of our own unworthineſs, and of thine infinite mercy and goodneſs, that we may approach thine holy altar, and humbly implore thee, the Fountain of wiſdom and ſtrength, that thou wouldſt be pleaſed to enlighten our underſtandings, that we may ſee ourſelves as we are

are ſeen of thee, and may abhor ourſelves as in duſt and aſhes, feeling all thoſe penitential affections which may render us the objects of thy forgiveneſs, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Be pleaſed to aſſiſt us with the aid of thy Holy Spirit, that, in the future part of our earthly pilgrimage, we may be able effectually to correct the errors which we have committed in the firſt. — That, under the influence of thy grace, we may paſs the time of our ſojourning here in fear, and may be ſtrengthened to lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which doth moſt eaſily beſet us, and run with patience the race which is ſet before us, in hope of attaining the eternal inheritance that fadeth not away. Thou moſt glorious Being, who art the ſource of ſtrength to the righteous in all generations, and the tower of their defence; whoſe bread ſhall never fail them, and their waters ſhall be ſure; look down upon us, and ſend us help out of thy ſanctuary, and ſtrengthen us out of thy Sion, that we may be ſtrong in the

the Lord, and in the power of his might, and be able to ſtand againſt the force of all thoſe enemies who would impede our progreſs to the city of Jeruſalem, the city of the ſaints ſolemnities. Be pleaſed, O Lord, to conduct us by thy counſel, ſtrengthen us by thy grace, and afterwards take us into the realms of celeſtial glory; that, when thou ſhalt call us hence, we may enter into thoſe regions where there is fulneſs of joy; and where, with the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, whoſe names are written in heaven, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, we may celebrate thy praiſe. It is with this view our ſouls are proſtrate before thee; and we would aſcribe to thee, glory, majeſty, and dominion, and every other excellent attribute of which thou art worthy, both now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VIII.

WHEN I firſt entered under this roof, I felt as little diſpoſition to vocal public ſervice as any in the whole of this congregation could have poſſeſſed. Conſcious of my own weakneſs and my many infirmities, I ſecretly wiſhed to be ſtrengthened by him, who is the Miniſter of the ſanctuary and the glorious High Prieſt of the Chriſtian religion; and indeed, unleſs we are favoured with his preſence, we ſhall ſit as it were in darkneſs and in the regions of the ſhadow of death. If we feel not the

influence of his Holy Spirit, effectually to quicken us and inſpire us with the ſpirit of devotion, in vain ſhall we lift up our hands and offer up the ſacrifice of vocal prayer and praiſe unto him. It would be well if we had ever in remembrance, that of ourſelves we are nothing, and of ourſelves can do nothing, I mean nothing that is eſſentially good. Unleſs in our religious aſſemblies we are firſt miniſtered unto by the chief Shepherd and Biſhop of ſouls, we cannot poſſibly miniſter one to another. This the apoſtles very evidently ſhew, particularly where one of them, alluding to his Goſpel-miniſtry, ſays, *that we may comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourſelves are comforted of God.* The diſciple muſt firſt receive of his Lord, before he can diſpenſe it to his brethren. And it is therefore that we profeſs, I ſay profeſs at leaſt, to meet upon one common bottom, both miniſters and thoſe in a private ſtation, to wait, in all ſingleneſs of heart, upon that Being, who regardeth the crying of the poor and

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the ſupplications of the needy; who in a peculiar manner will look unto that man who is poor and of a contrite ſpirit, and that trembleth at his word. And, *though the youth may faint, and the young men utterly fall, yet thoſe, who wait upon the Lord, ſhall renew their ſtrength; they ſhall mount upwards with wings as eagles; they ſhall run, and not be weary; they ſhall walk, and not faint.*

It might perhaps be a little profitable for us to enquire what we are to underſtand by the renewing of our ſtrength: *they, that wait upon the Lord, ſhall renew their ſtrength.* I conceive this to be intended purely in a ſpiritual ſenſe; for, if natural ſtrength be exhauſted by labour or fatigue, it is to be recovered, in the ordinary courſe of God's providence, only by reſt and the application of ſuitable nutritious food; but thoſe, who wait upon the Lord, ſhall renew their ſtrength. Such are the nature and conſtitution of the human ſoul, that, in order to be preſerved and live to God,

with a holy zeal for his name and for his cauſe, to be endowed with ſtrength virtuouſly to reſolve, and virtuouſly to purſue the juſt man's way, it muſt be renewed by food that is of a ſpiritual nature; that, as bread is a term for natural food, which is adapted to the ſupport and well-being of our bodies, ſo this ſpiritual food, renewed unto us by the renewings of the Holy Ghoſt, is that bread which indeed the world knoweth not of. The world that lieth in wickedneſs, the ſenſualiſt, has no taſte nor reliſh for that bread which cometh down from God out of heaven, and nouriſheth the ſoul up unto eternal life.

Though, in the application which the diſciples were inſtructed to make to the common Father of us all, outward bleſſings might be included with ſpiritual ones, yet doubtleſs, as the welfare of the ſoul is of infinitely more importance than the health and welfare of the body, in that part of the prayer, in which we are inſtructed to ſay — Give us this day our daily bread, is principally

principally intended that ſpiritual communication with the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh, which imparts ſtrength and vigour to the ſoul, animating it with a ſpirit of real devotion, that it can aſcend above this lower and terreſtrial ſphere, — aſcend as upon *the wings of an eagle*, a bird which is ſaid to approach the neareſt to that glorious natural luminary, the ſun, in its flights. So, that ſoul, which poſſeſſes not only the ſpirit of real religion, but alſo feels its beſt affections animated towards God, will have this privilege over the mere profeſſor of religion, that he will aſcend as upon the wings of an eagle, aſcend in an awful contemplation of the divine attributes, in a meditation upon ſpiritual ſubjects, in a ſtrain of holy and fervent devotion; he will aſcend the mount of the Lord's holineſs, encompaſs his altar in the multitude of his mercies, and lift up his heart with his hands to that Being who inhabits the heavens.

Impreſſed with the importance of theſe truths, which we, as a religious ſociety,

peculiarly profeſs, let us, friends, not come to theſe meetings merely with an expectation of receiving benefit, edification, or comfort, one from another. Let us not look one upon another with — *Men and bre'hrēn, what ſhall we do to be ſaved?* or, who ſhall ſhew us any good? But, ſenſible of our own reſpective wants, and impreſſed with a juſt idea of the ſolemnity of that buſineſs which we are profeſſedly met about, let us, in the nothingneſs of ſelf, in the ſilence of all fleſh, reverently wait upon the Miniſter of the ſanctuary; and to him let us look with all ſingleneſs of heart, and ſay, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thus, poſſeſſing that affection of mind which is analogous to the affection of corporal hunger, as perſons ſenſible of our wants, and alſo where thoſe wants can be effectually ſupplied, we ſhall become the objects of that moſt deſirable bleſſing, *bleſſed are thoſe who hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled.* It ſeems to me, beyond the leaſt de-

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gree of doubt, that the royal pſalmiſt felt this ſpiritual hunger; he felt this ſenſe of want, and the need that he ſtood in of a ſupply from the divine preſence, when he ſpeaks to this purport: *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God;* and again, *My ſoul thirſteth for God, yea, for the living God.* This paſſage of the royal pſalmiſt ſeems to convey an idea to me of the ſoul which feels the weight of its own infirmities, the preſſure and the importunity of ſurrounding temptations; cloſely preſſed, hunted as it were, purſued by its enemies, as the hart, when its ſtrength is nearly exhauſted, and almoſt ready to faint and drop with thirſt, to whom nothing could be more precious than a ſpring of water: therefore, as the hunted hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo that ſoul, which is ſenſible of its infirmities, and feels the preſſure of ſurrounding temptations, longs after that immortal ſpring of goodneſs, where it may be refreſhed and ſtrengthened, and eſcape from its ene-

mies, to purſue its courſe ſucceſsfully, and ultimately to finiſh it with joy.

I wiſh we were more and more impreſſed with a juſt ſenſe of what we are, that the pride of human nature were more effectually humbled; — that we might look up to him who is the ſource of all that is excellent and good, and, to uſe the language of the holy penman, *feel after the Lord, if haply we might find him.* And he, whom the fervent ſoul is in ſearch after, is not afar off; he, whom thou longeſt for, will ſuddenly come unto his temple; but, *who ſhall abide the day of his coming? who ſhall ſtand when he appeareth?* When the ſoul is thus favoured with a ſpiritual communion and intellectual ſenſe of the ſupreme Being, it is then that every thing that is exalted becomes abaſed; the loftineſs of man is brought down; he ſees himſelf as a worm, and no man; as unworthy the leaſt of his mercies and truth; and therefore, in this view of himſelf and of the ſupreme Being, he will break forth, in the language of

Job,

Job, *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear*;—ſo far the ſpeculatiſt may go, ſo far the theoriſt may collect a ſyſtem of faith; but, he not only heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but, ſays he, *now mine eye ſeeth thee*. He had formed juſt notions of the ſupreme Being; he was enlightened to have juſt ideas of himſelf. *I have heard of thee*, ſays he, *by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee; wherefore I repent and abhor myſelf in duſt and aſhes*. This is that humbling ſenſe which we all of us ſhould poſſeſs of ourſelves, if, in the ſenſe which our Saviour intended, we were favoured to ſee God: *Bleſſed* (ſays he) *are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God*; which certainly muſt be intended in a peculiar and ſpiritual ſenſe, for he is not the object of our ſenſes. To be ſure, in one reſpect, it may be ſaid, the pure and the impure ſee God; they have a ſenſible demonſtration of his being in the works of creation, and of the attributes of power, wiſdom, and goodneſs; but they have not that animating, that intellectual,

tellectual, viſion, which is the bleſſing of the pure in heart: *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God.* Let none be ſo weak as to imagine this is to be underſtood in the fulleſt ſenſe of the word; for, in the ſupreme Being *we live, and move, and have our being*; he comprehends all things, and is comprehended by nothing. *If thou aſcend up to heaven, he is there; if thou go down to the depth of the ſea, he is there.* The darkneſs and the light are both alike to him; he is infinite in all his attributes; he is omnipreſent; he pervadeth every part of his vaſt extended empire; there are no bounds to Omnipotence; he remains the ſame from generation to generation; with him, the perfect King, there is no variableneſs, neither any ſhadow of turning. When we contemplate with propriety the attributes of this Being through the ſanctification of the Spirit, then we experience what it is to have a pure heart, a heart poſſeſſing purity of intention, whoſe faculties and powers are placed on a pure object,

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and all under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and under the government of thoſe laws which the infinitely-wiſe Legiſlator hath adapted to promote the happineſs of all his creatures, and to prepare them for the glory, and the dignity, that is the peculiar privilege of the pure in heart; the enjoyment of that pure ſtate of being, which we ſee now but darkly, through a glaſs, where the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and the weary are at reſt; where the ſociety of the juſt are employed in contemplating the attributes of the eternal King, and join in the *ſolemn ſong of Moſes, the ſervant of God, and of the Lamb, ſaying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints!*

PRAYER

PRAYER

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CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST gracious God, as of ourſelves we can do nothing, be pleaſed, we humbly beſeech thee, to look down from the heavens, the habitation of thy holineſs, favourably upon us at this ſeaſon. Do thou lift up the light of thy glorious countenance upon us, that in thy light, O Lord, we may ſee light, and that our underſtandings may be effectually informed reſpecting thoſe things which belong to our peace and to

to thy glory; that our underſtandings may not only be enlightened to ſee, but alſo our hearts ſtrengthened and animated to engage in the work of righteouſneſs, which is peace, and the effect of it quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.

O moſt merciful Father, look down upon us, vile unworthy creatures; inflame our hearts with a ſenſe of gratitude to thee, the Author and Fountain of every good and perfect gift, of all thoſe bleſſings which we have received, and have ſo much miſapplied, in the courſe of our ſhort pilgrimage; that, under a juſt ſenſe of thy majeſty, of thy mercy and goodneſs, and of our own weakneſs, we may be induced to approach thy holy altar, and put up our ſupplications unto thee, that thou wouldeſt be pleaſed to ſend us health out of thy ſanctuary, and ſtrengthen us as out of Zion.

Thou, that haſt been a rock and a place of refuge for the righteous in all generations, look down, we beſeech thee, upon thoſe that are under the preſſure of any ſpecies

cies of affliction and probation, thoſe whoſe hearts are right towards thee, who are going to Mount Sion, and have had their feet directed thither. Oh! be pleaſed to afford theſe the aid of thy Spirit in the moments of human weakneſs, and in their ſolemn adverſe ſeaſon. Lift up the light of thy countenance upon them. O Lord, preſerve us all in the courſe of our pilgrimage through this vale of tears; guide us, by the light of thy counſel, and afterwards receive us into the realms of celeſtial glory, where, having been previouſly effectually purged, ſanctified, and juſtified, in and through thy Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt, we may join the heavenly ſociety, and for ever be with the ſaints and angels, and ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, to laud and praiſe thy great and excellent name; to whom, for all thy mercies, be the dominion, thankſgiving, bleſſing, and praiſe, not only now, but henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IX.

THIS do, and thou ſhalt live. Theſe words of our Lord revived in my remembrance at this meeting, and I have been led to advert to the occaſion of their being delivered. It is, I think, written in one of the evangeliſts: *Behold, a certain lawyer ſtood up, and tempted him, ſaying, Maſter, what ſhall I do to inherit everlaſting life?* It is written, that he meant to tempt him; it follows of courſe, that his motive, in propoſing this queſtion, was not of the beſt kind; that it was not with a view of gaining information, but, if poſſible, to enſnare him, and take

take an occaſion againſt him. But, our Lord, upon this as well as upon every other occaſion, manifeſted that wiſdom which he poſſeſſed above all other men, that wiſdom which directed all that he did and all that he ſaid; *he ſpoke as never man ſpoke*; he ſpoke with peculiar authority, and not as the ſcribes. Inſtead of making an immediate and direct anſwer to this queſtion, he previouſly propoſed one to him. *What*, ſays he, *is written in the law? how readeſt thou?* To which the lawyer replied, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyſelf.* To which Jeſus ſaid, *Thou haſt anſwered right; this do, and thou ſhalt live.* It ſeemeth to me, that this lawyer might apprehend, as ſome others did who had a prejudice againſt Jeſus, and the worthy cauſe which he promoted upon the earth, that he came to deſtroy the law and the prophets, and to preach another law eſſentially different from that which had been

delivered

delivered to them; or that he diſpenſed with the obligation of that, which, by way of diſtinction, is called the moral law. But our Saviour evinced that he came not to deſtroy the law, but to fulfil it; he told them, that heaven and earth ſhould ſooner paſs away than one jot or tittle of the law ſhould fail. Now the law which our Saviour intended, when he ſays, *What is written in the law? how readeſt thou?* could not be any part of the new Teſtament, becauſe none of that had been written; he therefore intended that law of commandments which is of univerſal and indiſpenſable obligation, and is immutable: *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyſelf.* Now we are inſtructed that love is the fulfilling of the law; but in what ſenſe is it the fulfilling of the law? why, whoever poſſeſſes the love of God will be induced, by the beſt motives, to ſtudy his will, and to diſcharge the obligation of his ſeve-

ral religious duties to him.—If he loves his neighbour, he will be induced to desire his welfare on all occasions. He will seek the interest and good of his neighbour; he will not only be just, but merciful, kind, and loving. And this definition perfectly agrees with that passage where it is said, *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.*

Now I conceive that there is no other way for us to obtain that most desirable object of being accepted of our Creator, who is the Judge of the whole earth, than to observe those sacred commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets. And it seems to me, that there is much more of the love of God and the love of our neighbour assumed, or professed, than is really possessed at heart by mankind. The pride, the haughtiness, the irreverence, with which they appear in the presence of the omniscient Being, bespeak that they possess not the love of him in their hearts. Ambition, avarice, and the various species of vanity which have invaded the several classes of mankind,

mankind, beſpeak that they are void of the love of the God of heaven and of the whole earth. They, who riſe up early, and go to bed late, in order to add houſe to houſe, and barn to barn, and bag to bag, and land to land, till there is nothing left for the poor of the earth; who improve every opportunity to monopolize as much as poſſible the bleſſings of heaven, and whoſe thirſt ſeems to be inexhauſtible; who are prompted by avarice, which is a paſſion that increaſes with the increaſe of years, and increaſes with the increaſe of riches; manifeſt that the love of God is not in them: for, the apoſtle ſaith, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*; by which I underſtand, if a man is poſſeſſed of an inordinate love of the things of this world; if they ſo take hold of his affections, and ingroſs his attention, as to ſteal from him that awe of God which ever ought to pervade his ſoul; if it prevents his attention to the ſtatutes and the commandments of heaven, and prevents his

walking humbly and reverently through this ſhort ſcene of his pilgrimage; it is, and may be juſtly called, that kind of love of the world which excludes the love of the ſupreme Being.

But, while it is ſo little, I fear, poſſeſſed at heart, much is profeſſed by all the ſeveral denominations of religion; however they may differ with reſpect to ſpeculative tenets, certain rituals, and modes of devotion, and articles of faith, they all profeſs to love God, all acknowledge the obligation of that and of the ſubſequent commandment; but it is to be feared that we often treat the ſupreme Being in a manner ſimilar to that which we uſe one towards another. Among mankind, there are great and ſpecious pretences of friendſhip, when perhaps there is but little really poſſeſſed at heart; and indeed ſome, under the ſemblance of love and friendſhip, have only waited for an opportunity to ſtab the reputation, or injure their neighbour in his property or perſon, with ſecurity from the laſh of the law.

law. There are, who have made this profeſſion as a cloak of malicioufneſs; and, while they have ſaid, Art thou in health, brother? have had a dagger concealed beneath the black diſguiſe. Now we are abundantly inſtructed, that, though we may, and too frequently do, deceive one another, and paſs off baſe metal for ſterling coin, yet it is impoſſible we ſhould deceive that awful Being with whom we have to do; he ſees not as man ſees; he looks beyond the veil of every covering; he beholds the latent receſſes of the human heart. Let us therefore not be deceived, for God is not mocked; that which every man ſows, that ſhall he reap; if he ſows unto the fleſh, he ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but, if he ſows unto the Spirit, of the Spirit he ſhall reap life everlaſting.

In vain ſhall we call upon the name of the Lord, in vain ſhall we ſacrifice upon his altar, in vain ſhall we make many prayers, and ſpread our hands towards the habita-

tion of his holineſs, unleſs we poſſeſs the love of him in the higheſt; and which, whoever poſſeſſes, he will manifeſt in the various branches of life, his converſation, and commerce among mankind. He will conſcientiouſly diſcharge his religious, his ſocial, his relative, duties; and, in the ſphere of his movement, he will manifeſt the love of God by keeping his commandments. *If ye love me*, (ſays our Lord,) *keep my commandments*; and, if we would really become objects of his complacency, if we would be loved and honoured of that Being who made us for the purpoſe of his own glory, let us attend to the ſolemn injunction of the Author of the Chriſtian religion: *Keep you therefore my commandments and abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

Let us not therefore apprehend, that any articles of faith, that any rituals of devotion, or any form of prayer that can poſſibly be uttered, can be a ſubſtitute for this affection

affection of heart towards God, and which the conſideration of his attributes will the moſt powerfully engage us to poſſeſs. We have nothing that we have not received; he, the Ancient of days, is the ſole proprietor of the univerſe, the Lord of hoſts; he is one, and his name is one. We, the inhabitants of his footſtool, are but tenants at will. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof, and the cattle of a thouſand hills are his. And, ſeeing we poſſeſs nothing but what we have derived from him, that all the bleſſings which we have received are owing to his bounty and goodneſs, we ought not to boaſt as if we had not received them, but with all humility acknowledge his manifold goodneſs, and to offer unto him the ſacrifice of an undivided heart. It is the language of Wiſdom to the ſons of men, *My ſon, give me thy heart.* Our beſt affections will be engaged; then, indeed, we ſhall poſſeſs the very ſpirit of devotion; for, whoever poſſeſſes not the love of God poſſeſſes not the ſpirit of devo-

tion ; his hands may be lifted up towards the habitation of his holineſs, but his heart lies groveling on the earth ; he is worſhipping the gods of this world, ſilver and gold, and therefore the lifting up of his hands and the verbal oblation of his mouth will not be acceptable incenſe upon that ſacred altar, whereof thoſe who ſerve the tabernacle have no right to partake.

I wiſh that we might improve ſuch ſeaſons as this in a particular manner, to contemplate the divine attributes, to reflect and think upon his name, to recollect the inſtances of his goodneſs, of his power, and of his wiſdom, that ſo we may feel our affections more and more ſet upon things that are above, leſs and leſs upon things which are beneath, which are but of a tranſitory nature, and which periſh with the uſing. This was the injunction of the apoſtle : *Set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth.* This indeed is to be ſpiritually minded, as it is written,

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to be carnally minded is death, but to be ſpiritually minded is life and peace.

If we were really concerned to poſſeſs this love of God, it would not only manifeſt itſelf in the various branches of our religious duty, but alſo thoſe of a ſocial and relative kind. I think we are ſomewhere told, that, for a man to ſee his fellow-creature in diſtreſs, and ſhut up his bowels againſt him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? and the apoſtle reaſons very aptly: *If*, ſays he, *we love not our brother, whom we have ſeen, how ſhall we love God, whom we have not ſeen*, who is not an object of ſenſe, who is inapproachable? no man hath ſeen him, nor can ſee him; and, as we are incapable of rendering any thing unto God, who is abſolutely perfect, it ſeems that he accepts of the good offices we do for one another as if they had been done unto him, and he was capable of being benefited by them. This is illuſtrated by our Lord with reſpect to thoſe who had neglected him: *I was an-hungered, and ye fed me not; naked,*

and

and ye clothed me not; ſick and in priſon, and ye viſited me not; to which they made this reply: *When ſaw we thee an-hungered, or naked, or ſick, or in priſon, and did not miniſter unto thee?* — *Inaſmuch*, ſays he, *as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye did it not unto me*; and again, to thoſe who received him, it is ſaid, *I was an-hungered, and ye fed me; naked, and ye clothed me*, or words to the ſame import; *I was ſick and in priſon, and ye viſited me.* Now theſe poſſeſſed that modeſty which is peculiar to good men; they anſwered: *When ſaw we thee an-hungered, or naked, or ſick, or in priſon, and miniſtered unto thee? Inaſmuch*, ſays he, *as ye have done it to one of the leaſt of theſe little ones, you have done it to me.* — Who are theſe little ones? I conceive that we are all, by creation, God's little ones; he ſtands in the relation of a father to all ranks and claſſes of human beings; he of one blood has made all nations to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds

bounds of their habitation; and, as he has made them of one blood, ſo he looks upon them with an everlaſting love, which diſcriminates not the perſons of men; for, he is no reſpecter of perſons; but, in every nation, he, that feareth God and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted of him. And, that the little ones, in this place, intend not any peculiar claſs, to me is very evident; becauſe, we are under an obligation to do good to the unrighteous as well as the righteous, to the unjuſt as well as the juſt; not only to be loving to our friends, but to love our enemies, to do good to all; to put up our prayers, not for this or that peculiar claſs of perſons, but to addreſs our prayers for the vaſt community of creatures: — *I exhort*, ſays the apoſtle, *that prayers and ſupplications be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godlineſs and honeſty.* We are to pray for the righteous, that they may be confirmed in their ways; — for the wicked, that they may

may be reformed. We are to pray not only for our friends, for, if we love them that love us, what do we more than others? It is natural to have an affection for them who have an affection for us; but we muſt go farther than this, we muſt love them that hate us, and pray for them that perſecute us. If we poſſeſs this ſpirit of mind, if love prevails to all, then we ſhall ever have occaſion, as our Lord ſaid, rather to rejoice than to be ſorrowful if we ſhall be mal-treated by thoſe whoſe intereſt we have endeavoured to promote: — *Bleſſed are ye* (ſays our Lord) *when men ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt you, falſely, for my ſake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.* Now I wiſh that this affection of love, the love of God and of our neighbour, were more really felt at heart than it appears to be.

The love of our neighbour means not, in the common acceptation of the term, the people whoſe local habitation is near ours, and who lend us ſome aſſiſtance, as we

we are inſtructed in the caſe of the Samaritan and the poor Jew, when it was aſked our Lord, who is my neighbour? It ſeemed good ſometimes to him to anſwer the queſtions propoſed to him by a parable. It was peculiar to thoſe times and that part of the world; and, ſo frequent was it, that it is ſaid of our Lord, that without a parable ſpake he not unto them. A certain man, ſays he, went down from Jeruſalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who ſtripped him, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Here was an object for Chriſtian benevolence to exerciſe itſelf upon; here was an inſtance in which the love of our neighbour ſhould have been exerciſed; but it ſeems that thoſe, who ought to have poſſeſſed the greateſt ſhare of friendly affections, thoſe who waited upon the ſervice of the altar, wanted this affection. The prieſt paſſed by, the Levite followed his example; thoſe, who ought to have been the firſt to ſet an example of mercy, loving-kindneſs, and

charity,

charity, poſſeſſed not that affection, which would engage us, by every means in our power, to relieve the diſtreſſed and wipe away the tears of the afflicted. In ſhort, ſo much ſtreſs is laid upon the poſſeſſion of this affection, and exerciſing it in charity and kindneſs one towards another, that it is ſaid to be the religion which is pure and undefiled, not a religion of ſpeculation and theory: *Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourſelves unſpotted from the world.*

The prieſt paſſed by; the Levite alſo paſſed by. At length, it ſeems, a Samaritan came that way; and, though there had long ſubſiſted an enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans, yet he poſſeſſed ſo much of the love of God and his neighbour, that it overcame the prejudice of his education; though the object that claimed this attention was a Jew, he took compaſſion on him in this ſtate, and did not, as we often do to one another, pour in a mixture

ture of wormwood and gall, to aggravate the wounds, rather than the oil of love, to alleviate and aſſuage them. He poured in oil and wine; and not only ſo, but he looked forwards, and provided for his future ſubſiſtence; he ſent him to an inn, and, when he departed, directed the hoſt to take care of him, ſaying, Whatſoever thou ſpendeſt, when I come again, I will repay thee.

This is ſet forth as an example to us, which we ſhould by all means attempt to imitate. We ſhould be diveſted of every ſpecies of prejudice, and endeavour to have our hearts more enlarged in the love of God; and, the more we are enlarged in the love of God, the more ſhall we poſſeſs the love of our neighbour, and more promote the intereſt of the vaſt community of mankind, and be more diſpoſed to imitate the example of the Saviour of mankind among the poor and deſpiſed, who was, on that account, in reproach, called the friend of publicans and ſinners. We ſhould exerciſe our

gifts

gifts for the promotion of righteouſneſs on the earth, to prevent every calamity, and promote the intereſt of ſociety. It ſhould be the ſtudy of our lives, and our delight, to go about doing good. I am thankful I poſſeſs that ſpirit of charity that forgets all the diſtinctions of names, of rank, and of dignity. As men are ſtripped of theſe diſtinctions, and remember that they ſtand in the relation of children to the Father of mankind, ſo will their love and benevolence be; if we poſſeſſed this affection, we ſhould endeavour to promote concord among the ſeveral ranks of ſociety.

I wiſh we may ſee the reſtoration of thoſe primæval days, when the morning-ſtars ſang together, and all the ſons of God ſhouted for joy. — God is love; that is a term which is moſt aptly applied, and moſt glorioufly illuſtrates the attributes of the ſupreme Being. We are the offspring of his benevolence; it was to communicate happineſs, it was from the ſource of his infinite benevolence, that he created us, and

endued

endued us with capacities of partaking of the happineſs of immortality. He has called us to keep his ſtatutes, that we may poſſeſs a ſpecies of happineſs inconceivable to us at preſent, and which, in its duration, will run parallel with the endleſs ages of eternity.

Seeing we have received every thing we poſſeſs from him, let us be proſtrate at his footſtool; let us, in all the emotions of filial piety, approach his altar, in the multitude of his mercies, and lift up our hands to the habitation of his holineſs;—not only our hands, but alſo our hearts. *Lift up your hands and hearts to God*, I think the Pſalmiſt ſays, *who inhabits the heavens*. —Theſe will be ſeaſons of ſolemnity. We ſhall enter into the cloſets of our hearts, and ſhut the door; we ſhall be lifted up, as on the wings of an eagle, in the contemplation of his attributes, agreeable to the declaration of the prophet, who ſpoke in the name of the Lord: *Though the youth may faint, and the young men utterly fall, yet they*

who wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength; they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles; they ſhall run, and not be weary; they ſhall walk, and not faint. In holy fervour of ſpirit, we ſhall be able to enter into that within the vail, and in the depth of humiliation we ſhall worſhip the Lord in the beauty of holineſs. Thus ſhall we be qualified to join the celeſtial ſong: *Glory to God in the higheſt; on earth, peace; and good will towards men.*

Under the ſenſe of theſe things, the manifeſtation of his preſence, and a participation of that food which is of a ſpiritual nature, the bread that cometh down from God out of heaven, we ſhall be qualified to approach him, not in a formal manner, but the language of our hearts will be:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us, this day, our daily bread; and forgive us our treſpaſſes as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us; and, lead us not into temptation, but deliver

deliver us from evil; for, thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER

AT THE

CONCLUSION of the MEETING.

MOST gracious God, inſpire us more and more with ſuitable affections towards thee, that we may find acceſs to thy preſence, and offer up the acceptable incenſe of thankſgiving and of praiſe. O thou omniſcient Being, who knoweſt us altogether as we are, grant, we beſeech thee, that, under the influence of the light of the Goſpel of thy Son, we may ſee ourſelves as we are ſeen of thee; that, in

in the depth of reverence, we may abhor ourſelves in duſt and aſhes; that the remembrance of our paſt tranſgreſſions, which have loudly beſpoken our ingratitude to thee, thou moſt adorable Being, may be blotted out; and that we may feel that contrition of ſoul, which becomes every penitent who is the proper object of thy mercy. O let the conſideration of thine attributes and of our own unworthineſs humble us yet more and more in thy preſence; that, poſſeſſed with a filial fear of thee, we may in future be more circumſpect in our goings; and that we may ſeek, and be able to diſcriminate, the juſt man's way, and to walk in it, which, as the bright and ſhining light, ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day. O grant that we may be more and more enamoured with the love of virtue; that we may more and more prefer the narrow and the ſtrait gate, which leads to life, rather than the broad way of ſenſual indulgence, that leads to the gates of death, and ultimately will in-

volve ſuch as perſevere therein in the pit of perdition.

O moſt adorable Jeſus, increaſe our faith and love, and increaſe the friendly affections of our ſouls one towards another, that we may be diſpoſed, inſtead of burdening others, to bear each others burdens; inſtead of caſting about to enſnare and deceive, we may look upon our neighbours intereſt as our own; that we may promote the intereſt of righteouſneſs in the world; that, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, through grace, we may walk before thee ſo, in this world, as to have an ample hope of being received into the aſſembly of the juſt in the life to come.

O thou, who art the preſerver of men, influence us more and more by thy Spirit, that we may lay aſide every weight and every burden, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us; and run with patience the race which is ſet before us; and ſo to run, as that we may obtain the crown immortal, that ſhall never fade away. While we are

ſojourners

ſojourners in this world, and in the land of the ſhadow of death, open to us the brighter proſpect of a fairer day; that, whatſoever may be our lot in this pilgrimage, whether perſecution or diſtreſs, we may have an intereſt in thy Son, as a hope firm and ſteadfaſt, as an anchor in this tempeſtuous ocean. Grant that, when the days of our pilgrimage are concluded, we may receive the end of our faith, even the ſalvation of our ſouls, where the righteous ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and as the ſtars, for ever and ever.

O thou moſt righteous Being, in a ſenſe of thy goodneſs we would approach thy altar, and aſcribe to thee might, majeſty, and dominion, with every other excellent and adorable attribute, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE X.

UNDER an apprehenſion of duty, I have frequently laboured among you, in word and doctrine, for a ſeries of years. What effect it has had on thoſe who have heard me, I cannot preſume to determine; if I were, indeed, to judge by appearances, I ſhould conclude the obvious effects to be but little. But, there is a matter on which I am fully competent to determine: my motives have been of the beſt kind, the love of God and the love of my fellow-creatures; that love which worketh no ill, but would, by all poſſible methods, promote the eſſential

tial intereſt of its neighbours; and, having from time to time diſcharged what I apprehended to be my religious duty, I have therein found great peace. This, to myſelf at leaſt, has been the effect of my public labours; and, though it is probable, that what I have ſometimes delivered may have been more or leſs ſimilar to that which I have aforetime delivered, yet I hope, that even a repetition of doctrines and advices, which we are urged to deliver from a ſenſe of duty, may not be as water ſpilt upon a ſtone, but may have a tendency (if not to convey any material information to the underſtanding) to ſtir up at leaſt the pure mind by way of remembrance.

We have heard much; we have had line upon line, and precept upon precept; and there have been ſent among us, who, as good ſcribes, out of their treaſury have brought forth things new and old. But, the eſſential and important doctrines, which reſpect in particular our practical duties, make, it is to be feared, but a ſlight impreſſion

preſſion on the minds of men, even upon thoſe who are very fond of hearing, and have perhaps much to ſay concerning the myſteries of faith; who, whilſt they lay much ſtreſs upon ſpeculative opinions, have poſſeſſed too little of that real Chriſtian love and zeal, which manifeſts itſelf by a conduct conſiſtent with the commandments of the Author of the Chriſtian diſpenſation. We want to be ſtirred up, to be excited, to do that, which we want not to be inſtructed it is our duty to do. But, if there be any, in this auditory, whoſe underſtandings may have been bewildered in a long and tedious purſuit of ſpeculative notions; or who have attempted, though but with little ſucceſs, to inveſtigate abſtruſe points, and to comprehend myſteries which the wiſdom of the Holy Ghoſt may ſee meet to conceal from the fooliſhneſs of men, (the prying curioſity of the creature, who is more apt to inquire than to obey;) if there be any ſuch, who are yet unſatisfied with regard to thoſe grand and eſſential points,

upon

upon which their acceptance with the common Father of the human race depends: if there be any who are under the preſſure of manifold ſins and tranſgreſſions, are in doubt with reſpect to thoſe means which are neceſſary to be purſued, in order that their tranſgreſſions may be forgiven of God, and that they may be accepted of him; if there be any, who, in the anguiſh of their ſouls, have their hands upon their loins, with *what ſhall I do to be ſaved?* it ſeems to me to be my duty to ſtate to them a caſe, nearly perhaps as we have it repreſented in the holy Scriptures, reſpecting one, formerly, who propoſed a queſtion of this ſort.

How ſhall I come before the Lord? or wherewithal ſhall I bow myſelf before the moſt high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings and calves of a year old? ſhall I preſent him with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? ſhall I give him my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul? — Now it ſeems to me, beyond all

all controverſy, that, by *coming before the Lord, bowing before the moſt high God*, was meant, the bowing before him, or coming before him, acceptably. What ſhall I do to recommend myſelf to the divine notice, to have the load of my ſins taken off? my tranſgreſſions cancelled from the book of his remembrance? In anſwer to this, he was ſhewn that that which God required of man, as eſſential to his acceptance with him, was eaſily to be apprehended, and within the compaſs of his power to perform; that is to ſay, of man, favoured with the manifeſtation of the Spirit of God, and ſtrengthened by his grace.

He hath ſhewed thee, O man! what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Here our eſſential duties are ſummed up under three heads, which indeed comprehend much. — The firſt is *juſtice*. A man muſt be morally juſt before he can be religiouſly good; whereas we oft-times ſee the divine order perverted, and

that

that men are more zealous to be connected with parties, and more zealous for the intereſt of a ſect, than to maintain even the character of common honeſty.

Do juſtly.—Now the obligation of juſtice is void of any kind of perplexity. We no ſooner reflect upon the relation man ſtands in to man, but the propriety of juſtice is clear. We are without excuſe if we neglect to do juſtice; and, though this perhaps may come under the appellation of what is called a moral duty, let us not think meanly of moral duties; for, notwithſtanding the variety of ſpeculative doctrines publiſhed here and there, and curious diſtinctions made upon points of religion, what is the ſtate of moral juſtice among us? Let us look abroad among mankind; ſhall we not have cauſe to apprehend, of many, that their wits are employed, and time laid out, in planning ſchemes to take advantage of their neighbours? in laying a foundation to raiſe themſelves on the ſpoils of others? to make themſelves rich, and thereby fall into

into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in ſin and perdition? —— It ſeems to be the ſtudy of a great part of mankind to outwit and deceive the other; inſtances of notorious breaches of juſtice ſtrike us on every hand, and every where, and which people are the more prompted to commit from a deſire of a luxurious and pompous mode of life, which is too generally prevalent among mankind. The diſeaſe of luxury is almoſt epidemical; — through all claſſes there ſeems to be an emulation to excel, and many burſt in the attempt.

I am concerned at heart, friends, to revive in your remembrance the obligation of juſtice. We muſt be juſt and righteous before we ſhall be good; and it ſeems that our Lord laid a peculiar ſtreſs on what are called moral doctrines, that of juſtice and that of mercy; inſomuch that he ſays, *If ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your treſpaſſes*; and again he ſays, (which is worthy of note; it is called

the

the golden rule; it is a law, a general law, of action, worthy of the Moſt High to give, and of his Son to promulgate among the inhabitants of the earth,) *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them.* Here is the eſſence of all the beſt human laws or ſtatutes that ever were compoſed in the world. All human laws, ſo far as they are conſiſtent with propriety, are founded in, and conſiſtent with, this general law, which comprehends all relations and connections among mankind: — *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them.* If we would wiſh to appear with honeſty to our neighbours, let us act in the manner we would wiſh them to act to us. If we would wiſh them not to take advantage of us, let us not take advantage of them. As, in a time of diſtreſs, we would wiſh to have the ſympathy of our neighbours and the hand of relief extended to us, let us not forget the needy in the time of our proſperity, but do to them as we would they ſhould do to us. If we wiſh,

wiſh, being in danger, to be appriſed of that danger, that we might not fall into deſtruction, let us warn and admoniſh others. There is a mutual dependence runs through ſociety, and it is our duty to advertiſe one another in hours of peril; and, where we can do no poſitive good, we ſhould endeavour to prevent all poſſible evil. Theſe are duties which we want not ſo much to be convinced of, as to be effectually incited to perform. But, ſuch is the weakneſs of human nature, that people are more fond of taking up with ſubſcriptions to articles of faith, and of attendance to ordinances, and wiſh to get rid of their ſins in that way, and herein ſhew a great zeal; but that falls ſhort of the rectitude which the goſpel enjoins, and is the end of the law, and the end of the coming of Chriſt, and of offering himſelf a ſacrifice for ſin to produce order and righteouſneſs among all ranks of men. This was one of the ends of his coming; and, however ſpecious our profeſſions may be, how-

ever deeply we may enter into the myſteries of the kingdom of heaven, yet, if we poſſeſs not the ſpirit of charity, and motives to juſtice and benevolence, what is it? *If I ſpeak*, ſays the apoſtle, *with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as ſounding braſs or a tinkling cymbal*; *and, though I have the gift of prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, ſo that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing*. By charity, I conceive, is not meant a guſt of paſſion that would prompt a man occaſionally to do a good act, but a ſettled principle of goodneſs and benevolence, that would prompt a man to general juſtice, and not to be juſt only, but alſo good. *If I ſpeak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, it will profit me nothing*; *if I have all faith, and underſtand all myſteries, yet*, ſays he, *if I have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*; to ſhew, that, in order to our actions being denominated good, they muſt proceed from a good motive

motive and principle. He ſhews that the ſemblance of charity is nothing: *If I give my body to be burned, and my goods to the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* Therefore, let us endeavour to be really that we ſeem to be. Let us not content ourſelves with the ſemblance of holineſs, and charity, but let us hold the myſtery of the faith in a pure conſcience: for, it is poſſible people may conceive right notions of things, and yet, for want of receiving them as a principle influencing their actions, they may hold the truth, but hold it in unrighteouſneſs; but he, who holds the myſtery of faith as he ought to hold it, holds it in a pure conſcience.

Our Saviour, in his miniſtry, was gentle in his addreſs, and perſuaſive in his language. When he addreſſed the publicans and ſinners, he found more openneſs to receive the goſpel among this rank of people, than thoſe who had the form of godlineſs, but denied the power thereof; inſomuch, that it became a proverb, that he

was the friend of publicans and ſinners; for which conduct he gave this eſſential reaſon, that he came not to call the righteous, but ſinners, to repentance. *Where the carcaſe is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* Among theſe people there was a diſpoſition to receive him; and, among other things which the meſſengers of John were required to teſtify that they had ſeen, was, that the poor had the goſpel preached to them. How did this friend of publicans and ſinners, who ſpoke with ſo much gentleneſs, behave when he came to addreſs the ſuperior characters, in all the pomp of their ſanctity, who made broad the phylacteries, who were zealous for the written and oral traditions of their fathers? *O ye generation of vipers, how can ye eſcape the damnation of hell! Ye are like whited ſepulchres, which, indeed, appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead mens bones.* And he takes occaſion to inſtruct his followers, *unleſs*, ſays he, *your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees,*

ſees, you ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, what was the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees? It ſeems they appeared more than a little zealous for the rituals of the Moſaic diſpenſation, were punctual to the time of prayer, ſpecious in their addreſs to the Majeſty of heaven, and performed all the ſervice of the Jewiſh tabernacle; but, though they poſſeſſed the righteouſneſs of the law, they were ſtrangers to moral righteouſneſs. *Ye pay tithe of mint, and anniſe, and cummin,* ſays he, *but what have you neglected to do? Ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and truth: theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*: by which, he does not reprehend them for their performance of the rituals of that diſpenſation, which were obligatory until the ſacrifice of Chriſt, yet he ſhews the ſuperiority of moral and practical truths, mercy and judgement. *Theſe ought ye to have done*; and, therefore, in point of order, when the prophet anſwers

the queſtion propoſed to him, the firſt is, *do juſtice:* which I conceive not only comprehends the obligation we owe to one another, but the obligation we owe to the Supreme Being. While I am zealous to plead for the obligation of juſtice among men, and the diſcharge of the duties of ſocial relations, I would by no means forget that there is a juſtice due to the glorious father of all we poſſeſs. He has made us, not we ourſelves; we are his offspring; he has communicated to us a variety of temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings, and we ought, in point of gratitude, in point of juſtice, to make a proper application of thoſe bleſſings, to render to him the duty that ariſes from the relation that we ſtand in to him as his children, the offspring of the everlaſting Father; and, therefore, he calls upon us, *my ſon, give me thy heart.* He would not require that of us which is not in point of juſtice our duty to comply with: give me thy heart; give me the beſt of thy affections; manifeſt thy love to me by keeping

ing my commandments, as a good ſteward; for, we are all, all ranks and claſſes of beings are, ſtewards of the manifold grace of God; and it is required of ſtewards that they be found faithful. The time is approaching, when it will be ſaid, *give an account of thy ſtewardſhip; for, thou mayſt be no longer ſteward.* Let us, therefore, aſk ourſelves this queſtion,— what have we received? what improved? and what miſapplied? and then aſk, what oweſt thou to my Lord? The debt is immenſe. We have received much: our improvements have been little; but wherewith ſhall we come before the Moſt High? In what way will the Father of mercies be propitious to us? Let us firſt confeſs our faults; let us not cover our ſins, or ſeek to hide them; for, he that hides his ſins ſhall not proſper: let us acknowledge our ſins; let us encompaſs his altar in the multitude of his mercies; let us poſſeſs the penitential affection of the poor publican, while the Phariſee could boaſt of his faſting twice in the week, giving alms of all he poſſeſſed,

and not being as other men, even as the poor publican. Notwithſtanding theſe pompous words, he was not accepted. The poor publican had nothing to plead, no merit to recommend him; and, therefore, under the contemplation of the infinite Majeſty he was about to approach, he had not courage to lift up his hands towards the habitation of his holineſs; but, ſighing, ſaid, *Lord, be merciful to me, a ſinner!* If we poſſeſs theſe penitential affections, we ſhall become the objects of that mercy which our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt exemplified in his miniſtry, in his character, in his crucifixion, in his reſurrection, and aſcenſion into glory. It is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners; and we have all ſinned, and fallen ſhort of the glory of God: we have done the things we ought not to have done, and left undone the things we ought to have done. And, ſuch is the marvellous condeſcenſion of him who inhabits eternity, that he

he ſent forth his Son, not with a meſſage of unrelenting vengeance, not to aſſign to fallen ſpirits a habitation in thoſe realms where the worm ſhall never die, and the fire ſhall never be quenched, but with the glorious and intereſting meſſage, that, whoſoever forſakes his ſins ſhall be forgiven of his Father who is in heaven, and whoſoever frames his life and manners, in conſequence of it, with this penitential affection, he ſhall poſſeſs that inheritance which is unſpeakably glorious; his ſins ſhall be cancelled from the book of the divine remembrance, and ſhall not ſtand againſt him in the judgement of the laſt day. If we confeſs our ſins, God is merciful and juſt to forgive us our ſins. I diſtinguiſh between the forgiveneſs of ſins and the converſion of our ſouls. The forgiveneſs of ſins is purely owing to the mediation and the interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt; but the work of converſion requires and calls upon the object to be a co-worker with the influence of grace to purify the ſoul, and turn its

its feet into the juſt man's path, which is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day. Therefore, ſaith our Lord, *my Father worketh, and I work: work ye alſo.*

He came to his own, and his own received him not; but, to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the ſons of God, even to as many as believed on his name. Therefore, we experience the remiſſion of ſins through the forbearance of God; but the work of ſanctification is not yet completed; the office of the Mediator is not only to procure for us the remiſſion of ſins paſt, but it is to correct thoſe vices in our very ſouls which the goſpel-axe is laid to the root of, the corrupt tree in us, the root of our corrupt affections; and, till this has effectually done its office, we ſhall not be cleanſed from all unrighteouſneſs. God Almighty grant, of his infinite mercy, that we may not be content under any ſpecious pretences of religion, but that we may ſeek to attain that purity

purity of heart without which we cannot enter the habitation of thoſe glorious regions, where nothing that defiles, or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, can enter. It is the pure in heart who ſhall ſee God: it is thoſe that have been reformed from the errors of their ways, and whoſe affections are raiſed from earth to heaven, from natural to ſpiritual objects; theſe are of the number of the Lord's redeemed, who, when the time of their conflict ſhall be ended on earth, ſhall ſtand upon Mount Sion to celebrate the praiſes of the great King for ever and ever! I feel my heart enlarged with the love of the goſpel, with the benevolent ſpirit which uſhered the Saviour into the world: *Glory to God in the higheſt, on earth peace, and good-will to men!*

We all ſtand in the relation of brethren to one another. We all ſtand in the relation of children to the univerſal Parent. We are his by creation. The Lord grant we may be his by adoption: that we may

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be ſealed by him to the day of complete redemption : that we may be cleanſed from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit : that we may be influenced by the moſt pure motives to conduct ourſelves by his commandments here, and have a well-grounded hope of living with him hereafter ! I commend us to the protection of our Almighty Father ; and, finally, wiſh us to retain, in our remembrance, theſe important articles, that they may be written, as with the point of a diamond, upon the tablet of our hearts. *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good!* Conſult the ſacred oracles : thou wilt be inſtructed in that which thou art to know, qualified to perform that which thou art to do, be enlarged in thy beſt faculties and powers to enter into thoſe regions where the inhabitants ſhall not ſay I am ſick ; for, the people who dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity.

I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build us up in the moſt holy faith, and to give us an inheritance

heritance among all them who are ſanctified. *He hath ſhewn unto thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of thee; to do juſtice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* Add, to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godlineſs; to godlineſs, brotherly-kindneſs; and, to brotherly-kindneſs, charity: and, if theſe things be in you, and abound among you, they ſhall make you that you ſhall be neither barren, nor unfruitful, in the ſaving knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt!

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XI.

IT is appointed unto men once to die. This is one of thoſe propoſitions which no man is ſo weak as to deny. But the ſacred penman proceeds farther,—*and, after death, cometh the judgement.* This, alſo, is a propoſition which is of courſe admitted, in terms, by every one who profeſſes to be a Chriſtian, or a diſciple of Chriſt; and, indeed, this propoſition is of the moſt awful and affecting nature. We muſt all ſtand before the judgement-ſeat of Chriſt, and receive a recompence of reward according as our

our works have been. A Judge, who is infallible, who will not deceive, nor can poſſibly be deceived; he taketh cognizance not only of our outward actions, but he penetrates the very thoughts and intents of all our hearts; and, ſeeing that he will not condemn the innocent, nor acquit the guilty,—on this reflection, methinks, it would be well for us, as it were, to lay our hands upon our hearts, and aſk ourſelves this queſtion, — What manner of creatures ought we to be? The Author of our being is a God of infinite purity and holineſs; nothing can be united unto him, no being admitted to dwell in his preſence, (in which there is fulneſs of joy,) who is in a ſtate of impurity: there nothing that worketh an abomination or that loveth and maketh a lie, can have an entrance: for, it is poſitively aſſerted by the higheſt authority, that, without holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the Lord. On the contrary, it is declared, *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God*:—that they ſhall have that union

union and communion with him, in which the happineſs of all ranks and claſſes of intelligent beings moſt certainly depends. But there is another propoſition that it will be well for us alſo ſeriouſly to conſider, *if any man ſay that he hath no ſin*, or that he has not ſinned, (as ſome have rendered this paſſage,) *he deceiveth himſelf, and the truth is not in him. We have all*, ſays the prophet, *as ſheep gone aſtray*, — ſtrayed from the paths of the juſt into the wilderneſs of this world. We have all ſinned: we have all fallen ſhort of the glory of God. In this ſtate, therefore, whatever vain expectations any may entertain, they are not fit ſubjects of the kingdom of heaven: they are under the power and government of the prince of the power of the air, which ruleth in the hearts of the children of diſobedience. Thoſe, therefore, who are in this ſtate, have no ground of hope of being admitted into the kingdom of the juſt; there is no communion between light and darkneſs, there is no fellowſhip between Chriſt and Belial;

and, indeed, our Lord positively asserts, *If ye die in your sins, where I go ye shall not not come*; therefore, though he came (the messenger from the Father was the Son of God, the eternal Word) with the glad tidings of the gospel to all the inhabitants of the earth, yet his coming became effectual only to those who received him. *I came*, says he, *to my own, but my own received me not*; *but, to as many as received me, gave I power to become the Sons of God*; as much as to say, Be ye not deceived, and imagine, that, in consequence of my coming, you are to be saved in your sins, or to have a licence from heaven to indulge your appetites. No: the purpose of my coming is not to save you in, but to save you from, your sins; and it is a saying that is worthy of all acceptation, *that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*. The Scriptures propose to us, and in a very explicit and comprehensive manner, what we must be before we can be accepted of his Father, who is in heaven. *Repent*, says he, *and*

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be converted, that your ſins may be forgiven you: ſo that it ſeems we muſt, in the firſt inſtance, repent of thoſe ſins which we have committed. We muſt really feel thoſe penitential affections of ſoul that would prompt us, if poſſible, to undo all the evil actions we have done; that would humble us moſt effectually under a ſenſe of our ingratitude to the Author of our being, and that would prompt us, in the depth of our humiliation, to ſay, *a Saviour, or I die; a Redeemer, or I periſh!* We muſt not only repent of our ſins paſt, but we muſt alſo be converted; not repent of thoſe that are paſt, and ſtill purſue a courſe of iniquity, but we muſt turn from unrighteouſneſs to righteouſneſs; our affections muſt no longer be ſet upon things that are upon the earth, but upon things that are above; we muſt be no longer carnally, but ſpiritually, minded; for, under the moſt ſpecious profeſſion, to be carnally minded is death, but to be ſpiritually minded is life and peace; and, ſuch is the infinite mercy and goodneſs of God,

through Jeſus Chriſt, towards us, that he wills not the death of ſinners, that is, to ſee the eternal miſery, or infelicity, of a ſinner, but rather that all ſhould return, ſhould repent, and live a life of righteouſneſs here, and, of courſe, be glorified with him hereafter in the kingdom of the juſt; and the terms which he propoſes are worthy of the Supreme Being to give, and would become us to accept with all penitence of ſoul and gratitude of heart. *If*, ſays he, *ye confeſs your ſins, God is merciful; he is juſt to forgive us our ſins*;—not only to forgive the ſins that are paſt, but, by the operation of his grace, to ſanctify us throughout, to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs; and, of courſe, if we become cleanſed from all unrighteouſneſs, we ſhall be made meet for a habitation in the kingdom of heaven. Let us, therefore, be awakened to righteouſneſs; awakened to righteouſneſs from the nature of the diſpenſation we are under, that leads into every kind of purity and holineſs, that ſo we may repent, and

and alſo be converted, —converted at heart, and experience redemption through his blood, which was ſhed for the ſins of all mankind.

If we were thus to contemplate the nature of the goſpel-diſpenſation, we, indeed, ſhould become circumſpect, we ſhould be ſerious, we ſhould be inquiſitive; and this prayer would become as it were habitual, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right ſpirit within me*; for, as it is the heart that is the object of converſion, by the power of an endleſs life, ſo it is the ſeat of ſin. It is there the prince of darkneſs has uſurped dominion; and he, being caſt out, or the old man with his deeds put off, the peaceable kingdom of Immanuel is ſubſtituted; that kingdom which cannot be removed. If this became the ſerious engagement of our hearts, we ſhould not only be induced to profeſs the Chriſtian faith, but alſo to exemplify the love of its Author, of our Father who is in heaven, by obſerving thoſe commandments which

are of univerſal obligation, and obedience to which is the rock which is immutable, againſt which the gates of hell ſhall never prevail. It is not merely holding forth the truths of the goſpel that will render us acceptable; theſe may be held forth in theory, and yet held in unrighteouſneſs, and will never avail us in the ſolemn ſeaſon of the great day. Let us therefore advert to the cloſe of that moſt excellent ſermon, preached upon the mount. After many practical doctrines concerning the kingdom of heaven had been opened to the hearers, our Lord took occaſion to diſtinguiſh between the mere hearer of the word, the formal profeſſor, and one that was a true diſciple. *If any man hear my words, and do them not, I will liken him unto a fooliſh man who built his houſe upon the ſand; and the rains deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and the houſe fell; and great was the fall thereof.* So will it be with the hope of the hypocrite, for it ſhall periſh. The hope of the hypocrite may buoy him up in

in the ſeaſon of proſperity; but, in the ſeaſon of adverſity, it will fail him. When the rains ſhall deſcend, and the winds of adverſity blow, he will not be able to ſtand the ſhock. When he paſſeth through the valley of the ſhadow of death, this hope will be like the lamps of the foolifh virgins. *If any man hear theſe ſayings of mine, and doeth them*,—(from which I infer they are practicable, and might be done, the contrary poſition implying the moſt daring reflection on the attributes of the divine being:—does he command us to make brick without ſtraw? command us to do that which we have no power to perform? far be it from the Father of mankind:)—*If any man hear theſe ſayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wiſe man, who built his houſe upon a rock; and, when the rains deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, it fell not, becauſe* (not of any intrinſic merit of his own, but becauſe) *it was founded upon a rock*, the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, the foundation of the apoſ-

tles and prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone, diſallowed indeed of men, who would wiſh to build a ſpecious edifice on an unſtable foundation, who follow lying vanities in oppoſition to every thing ſuited to an immortal ſpirit.

Let us, my friends, on this occaſion, (a ſolemn occaſion it is to me; we have before us the remains of a friend, taken off in the midſt of her days, taken from the ſociety of the living; but nothing has happened to her that is uncommon :—in the midſt of life we are all in death, we have no dependence on to-morrow,) let us, I ſay, improve the preſent opportunity. Some, indeed, fall off as fruit which drops when it is come to full age, but others are, as it were, cut off with a noxious blaſt by the hand of him whoſe ways are all in wiſdom. It is ours, therefore, to ſubmit; and, ſeeing death is not aſſigned to any particular age, (as the arrows thereof enter into the habitations of the rich as well as the cottage

tage of the poor; it ſeparates the father from his children, the huſband from his wife, the neareſt and deareſt connections in life;) let us, ſeeing we have no continuing city here, ſeek one above, whoſe foundations are laid in Zion, and are immutable as the throne of God.

I feel my heart enlarged, I truſt, in the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, whoſe love conſtrains me to addreſs you, my fellow-pilgrims, in this way. Let not the ſtrong man glory in his ſtrength, the rich man in his riches, nor the wiſe man in his wiſdom; but, if any man glories, let him glory in this, that his Redeemer ſtands in the relation to him of one that is full of mercy and truth. *Let him glory in me, that I am the Lord, who exerciſe loving-kindneſs, judgement, and righteouſneſs, in the earth:* let us be ſolicitous that we may be accepted of the Father of the human race, when we ſhall have done with theſe tranſitory things. Every thing around us will ſerve to inſtruct an attentive mind. It is

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an awful truth, *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble: he cometh up like a flower, and is cut down: like a ſhadow he fleeth, and continueth not.* With reſpect to many within the audience of my voice, the houſes you poſſeſs were not long ſince poſſeſſed by your anceſtors; they are gone; your children will ſoon have the ſame to ſay of you.

Let us therefore improve the preſent opportunity, according to that meaſure of grace which we have received, that we may be ſanctified in body, ſoul, and ſpirit; that we may have nothing to fear from that ſtroke which we cannot poſſibly ſhun; then, to us, to live will be Chriſt, and to die will be gain. Let us ſo conduct ourſelves in this world, that, when the end of the world ſhall come upon us, (for, with reſpect to individuals, their diſſolution is the end of the world with them,) we may not be ſurpriſed. Let us, before we go hence to be ſeen no more of men, endeavour to lay up a good foundation againſt the time

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to come ; and then, when it ſhall pleaſe the great Diſpoſer of all things to ſend the meſſage, whether in the early part of life, or in more advanced age, there will be hope in the death of the righteous. Their hope is full of immortality.

I commend theſe obſervations to you, and I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them who are ſanctified by faith in the name of Jeſus Chriſt.

PRAYER

PRAYER

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CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING.

MOST gracious God, impreſs all our hearts at this ſeaſon, we humbly beſeech thee, with a ſuitable ſolemnity to approach thy awful preſence; that, inſpired by the ſpirit of grace, we may make an offering that ſhall be acceptable with thee. We have, indeed, abundant cauſe to acknowledge that we have not the leaſt degree of merit to plead. Whatever any of us poſſeſs, that is good, is of thee, from thee,

thee, and through the operation of thy grace. Be pleaſed yet more and more to impreſs us in a manner ſimilar to the poor publican; that, under a ſenſe of our own unworthineſs, we may call upon thy great and excellent name, with *Lord, be merciful to me a ſinner!* That, through effectual humiliation and penitence of ſoul, thou mayſt be pleaſed to cancel our tranſgreſſions from the book of thy remembrance, be merciful to our unrighteouſneſs, and our iniquities remember no more: that, by the ſanctifying influences of thy Spirit, our hearts may be alſo converted unto thee, that we may be cleanſed from all unrighteouſneſs, and enabled by thy grace to ſteer our courſe, in future, in the juſt man's path, which, as the bright and ſhining light, ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day: that we may paſs the time of our ſojourning here in fear, and may conclude our ſhort pilgrimage in thy favour, having a well-grounded hope that we ſhall be accepted of thee, and admitted into the general aſſembly

bly of the juſt, the Church of the firſt-born, who are already triumphant in glory. O let us more and more feel the prevalence of the love of thy Son, and that it may be ſhed abroad more and more in our hearts, and circulate more and more among one another: that we may put away all malice, and wrath, and love one another with a love unfeigned in Chriſt: and O merciful Father, endue us more and more with that ſpirit of charity that thinketh no evil, that is not eaſily provoked, that extends not to our friends only, but alſo to our enemies, that we may lead one another to the beautiful mountain, the mountain of thy holineſs, where the lion and the lamb ſhall lie down together, and a little child ſhall lead them: that the kingdoms of the earth may become the kingdoms of the Lord and of thy Son: that thy name may be great, among all the tribes of the Gentiles, from the riſing of the ſun to the ſetting of the ſame: that, O everlaſting Father, thy creatures may be ſaved of thee with an everlaſting ſalvation,

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bring thy ſons and daughters from afar, to ſit down in thy kingdom with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and praiſe and laud thy excellent name, who art worthy to receive the kingdom, power, and glory, both now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XII.

OF a truth I perceive that God is no reſpecter of perſons, but he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted of him. I preſume that moſt of you are acquainted with the particular cauſe of this declaration,—that an eminent apoſtle of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt ſeemed to have been of the opinion, that the goſpel-meſſage was not to extend unto the Gentiles. This was, perhaps, founded upon Jewiſh prejudice; and we are inſtructed, in this inſtance, of the power of prejudice to ſtop the ears and blind the eyes of a wiſe man.

The moſt worthy and moſt exalted characters have, more or leſs, manifeſted in their conduct the power of prejudice,—the prejudice of education; and, indeed, the wrong impreſſions, which mankind receive in their minority, generally are laſting, or with difficulty eraſed. They ſeem to be like characters which are cut out upon a tree, which grow wider and frequently deeper in proportion to the growth of the tree. Thus many prejudices, which mankind have received at an early time of life, are ſuch, that they have not been capable of clearly diſtinguiſhing one object from another. They, as it were, grow with their growth, and are ſtrengthened with their ſtrength. I conceive theſe are thoſe ſecret faults which the Pſalmiſt intended when he ſaid, *who can underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults.* It ſeems that an extraordinary diſpenſation of divine providence effectually removed this prejudice from the mind of the holy apoſtle. He was favoured with a viſion, in which he

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ſaw, as it were, a ſheet let down from heaven, containing various ſpecies of animals; and he was commanded to ariſe, to ſlay, and to eat; but he endeavoured to excuſe himſelf by ſaying, that he had not eaten any thing that is common or unclean; upon which he was taught not to call that common or unclean which God had cleanſed. The man to whom he was ſent was a man of a ſincere heart; his heart was right towards God; to him the glad tidings of the goſpel were publiſhed, though he was a heathen. The mercy of God, through Jeſus Chriſt, makes not that diſtinction, perſonal diſtinction, between the human ſpecies which the law of Moſes made among the inferior animals, ſome of which were forbidden as unclean. The apoſtle ſaw the deſign of this viſion, and there is no doubt that he felt his heart enlarged in a manner which, till then, he had been a ſtranger to. He now ſaw that the light of the goſpel was freely to be preached to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.

He ſaw that Immanuel was a light to enlighten the Gentiles as well as to be the glory of the people of Iſrael. *I have ſet him to be a light to the Gentiles, to be for ſalvation unto the ends of the earth*; not within the narrow circle of any party of human beings, not within the limits of any ſpot upon the face of the globe, but to be for ſalvation to the very ends of the earth. He, in the enlargement of his heart, breaks forth in this manner, *Of a truth*, ſays he, *I perceive*. From which I infer that he had ſeen, as it were, darkly through a glaſs; for, though, perhaps, friendly admonitions may not effectually remove our prejudices, yet, ſometimes at leaſt, they are conducive to this end. We begin to ſuſpect we err, and a man who begins to ſuſpect he errs is in the way to underſtand his errors; whereas the obſtinate may be compared to a man who ſhuts his eyes, and, of courſe, will not be enabled to diſcriminate objects even at noon-day; but the man, who begins to ſuſpect that he errs, or that he may err, begins

gins to open the door of his heart to conviction, and the apoſtle ſeemed to have had ſome glimmering of this glorious truth; but now the ſcales of prejudice fell from his eyes: his mental ſight was clear. *Of a truth*, ſays he, *I perceive that God is no reſpecter of perſons, but he that feareth God, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted of him*; and, I muſt confeſs, though it very unexpectedly appears to be my duty to confeſs it now, that, of all thoſe doctrines which I conceive to be errors, of all thoſe things which I conceive are not agreeable either to reaſon, to the nature of things, or to the Scriptures of truth, there is not one which to me is ſo palpable as the doctrine of partial election and reprobation; that is to ſay, that God, by virtue of his ſovereignty, did, of his own good will and pleaſure, create a certain number of intelligent beings, not only foreſeeing that they would ſin, and be laſtingly miſerable, but for that very purpoſe; that their miſery is in conſequence of his eternal decree; that the other

part, whether few or more, are ordained to everlaſting life; not in conſideration of any merit which they poſſeſs, (for, it is acknowledged that the elect poſſeſs no more merit than the reprobate; that the righteouſneſs with which they are clothed is the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; that they are ſaved by virtue of the propitiatory ſacrifice of the Son of God; that, by nature, they are black, they are vile, as the reprobate, but that they are comely with grace, as they ſtand related to Chriſt Jeſus, who is the head of his Church;) not in conſideration therefore of any thing they can merit, but of God's ſovereign pleaſure. But I would wiſh every one preſent ſeriouſly to conſider, whether a greater reflection could be caſt upon the divine attributes, unleſs it were to ſay that he created all mankind to be eternally miſerable. That God, the Father of the ſpirits of all fleſh, to whom we are indebted for our exiſtence, and who of his pleaſure did create us, ſhould do it with a view of making us, or any part of his creatures,

creatures, everlaſtingly miſerable, is ſuch an idea that I confeſs ſhocks me. I ſay it ſhocks me. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* He is not only a God of juſtice, but he is a God of goodneſs; but how can this be reconciled with goodneſs, that a Being ſhould purpoſely bring others into being in order to make them miſerable? It is repugnant to every idea that I can form of the Deity. It is a diſpoſition, indeed, that appears to me to beſpeak the nature of a tyrant, the nature of that being who is ſaid to go about like a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour; but this, as well as other erroneous doctrines, is ſaid to be founded upon the Scriptures. Thus the Scriptures are made to contradict themſelves, the literal ſenſe is adopted where that ſenſe coincides with the pre-conceived opinion; but, where the literal ſenſe accords not with that opinion, it is tortured a thouſand ways to expreſs what the Holy Ghoſt never intended, — whatever the parties wiſh it to ſpeak. Thus paſſages, ob-

viouſly figurative, have been conſidered as literal; and others, appearing plain, even to common ſenſe, to experience, to our common feelings, and to the nature of things, ſuch have been rendered myſterious by various comments, in which truth has been obſcured by the multitude of words without knowledge. But, I conceive, if we conſider the holy Scriptures, from the firſt chapter of Geneſis to the laſt in Revelations; if we are capable of laying aſide our prejudices; we ſhall ſee that they do aſſert the unity of God, his ſelf-ſufficiency, his omnipotence, his omniſcience. The univerſality of his love to his creatures is the ſcope and tendency of the ſacred pages, and *that* the motive of all the diſpenſations of his providence to mankind. His views (if I may uſe that expreſſion of the Ancient of days) terminated not upon himſelf, who is incapable of an acceſſion of happineſs, neither upon the miſery of his creatures, to which he could have no motive, but they terminated in the creature who is capable of

of immortality and eternal life. The Supreme Being, I conceive, to be the only perfectly diſtintereſted being in the univerſe: perhaps, a parent, for inſtance, (if the compariſon may at all be allowed,) a wife, an affectionate, parent, may bear ſome humble reſemblance of the univerſal Father. He is often ſet forth to us under the endearing character of our Father: *as a father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* He knows our frame, he remembers that we are but duſt; but the parent, who poſſeſſes the moſt delicate parental feelings, diſcovers the utmoſt ſolicitude for the happineſs of his offspring, and will find his happineſs intimately connected therewith. Such is the nature of that affection, ſtrengthened by moral ties, that a parent and his offspring may be ſaid to be connected by ſo many fibres of the heart: his happineſs is bound up in his offspring: he muſt rejoice when they rejoice, and ſuffer when they are afflicted. In alleviating their afflictions, he alleviates

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his own: in promoting the happineſs of his children, he promotes his own felicity; but, reſpecting the divine Being, the analogy will not ſtrictly hold. *Thy righteouſneſs*, as the text ſaith, *may profit the ſon of man, and thy wickedneſs may hurt a man as thou art.* The obſervance of the laws of virtue, of righteouſneſs, and truth, would promote the eſſential intereſts of ſociety. It would produce that harmony throughout all the claſſes of ſocial life, in which the greateſt degree of happineſs is to be experienced. Vice, on the contrary, is not only prejudicial to the intereſts of the individual, but its evil influence extends, far and wide, within the circumference of ſociety. Therefore, our righteouſneſs may profit men as we are, our wickedneſs may hurt the children of men, but our righteouſneſs cannot profit him who is perfect, abſolutely perfect, abſolutely good, ſelf-ſufficient, the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever, with whom there is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning. It is not the united

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ſupplications of all the ſouls within the limits of his vaſtly-extended empire that can add to his eſſential glory, that can add to his felicity ; neither is it the neglect of the worſhip of all ranks and orders of intelligent creatures that can diminiſh his glory, that can decreaſe his felicity ; therefore, his motive, in creating and communicating good to his creatures, muſt be a motive perfectly diſintereſted : it is love without the leaſt ſpecies of alloy. God's love was the adorable motive of his making beings capable of contemplating his attributes, and of that felicity which is derived from him : this was the glorious motive (if I may be indulged to ſpeak of the divine Being by attributing to him motives) that induced him to create the various orders and claſſes of intelligent beings, in this and every other ſphere, from the ſeraph above, that attends upon the ſacred throne, to the loweſt link in the ſcale of rational intelligent creatures. And, in thus contemplating the Deity, I find the beſt affections of my heart excited towards

towards him, my parent, in a ſenſe infinitely ſuperior to that natural relation which ſubſiſts among the human ſpecies and creatures: and, under this character, are we inſtructed to approach the Supreme Being, *Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*; in which there is ſomething that ſtrikes me with peculiar force, that individuals, when they approach the ſacred altar of the Lord Almighty, and prefer their petitions to him who ſees in ſecret, are not to conſider themſelves as detached from ſociety; they are not to implore the bleſſing for themſelves alone. It is not *my* Father, but *our* Father, which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name; by which we are inſtructed, that God is no reſpecter of perſons, that we all ſtand in the ſame relation to him, who is the God and Father of the ſpirits of all fleſh. Remember that the Scripture declares, that he is good to all. Can he be good to them, whom, by an eternal irrevocable decree, he has conſigned to everlaſting miſery? But God is good to

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all; therefore he has not predeſtinated to everlaſting miſery the creature he has formed, which would be, in the moſt obvious ſenſe of the words, to be a reſpecter of perſons, and muſt ariſe from a motive of partiality. We are inſtructed to reſpect no man's perſon; but this doctrine ſuppoſes that the divine Being reſpects perſons himſelf.

Various are thoſe paſſages of Scripture which might be educed, that bear a plain and obvious meaning, in oppoſition to this doctrine. And, though there may be ſome figurative paſſages of a doubtful tendency, in which the apoſtle aſſumes a borrowed ſtyle in his way of arguing with the Jews, yet I can never agree to explain plain paſſages by bold figures. We are abundantly inſtructed that he willeth not the death of a ſinner, but rather that he ſhould be turned, and live: that he ſhould repent, and be ſaved with an everlaſting ſalvation. We are alſo inſtructed, that, to them who ſeek for glory, honour, and immortality, God will render

render eternal life; but, unto them who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, *tribulation and anguiſh, indignation and wrath, upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil, ſo the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile*; for, there is no reſpect of perſons with God.

Let us, therefore, impreſſed with what I conceive are worthy notions of the Supreme Being, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called. The power of the goſpel of Jeſus is gone forth from ſea to ſea, from the rivers to the ends of the earth. The call of infinite mercy and goodneſs is extended to people of all names and all nations, to bring them into a ſtate of moral rectitude, to qualify them for the ſociety of the wiſe and worthy upon earth, and for the everlaſting communion of the ſpirits of the juſt made perfect in heaven: for this end is the goſpel preached to every creature under heaven. I wiſh that it may be remembered with the ſolemnity with which it ought to be remembered,

bered, that it is not any ſyſtem of faith, it is not any profeſſion of the purity of the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, it is not the acknowledgement of his miſſion, it is not a ſpeaking moſt honourably of his adorable character, of his miniſtry, of his crucifixion, of his reſurrection, and aſcenſion into glory, nor of the propitiatory ſacrifice which he made for the whole world, that can render us acceptable to the Father of ſpirits: the ground of our acceptance with God is upon the ſame univerſal principle of righteouſneſs delivered by God in his remonſtrance with Cain: *Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doeſt well, ſhalt thou not be accepted? and, if thou doeſt not well, ſin lieth at the door.* He was overcome by the power of, perhaps, one of the baſeſt paſſions the human heart is capable of. He was excited to deſtroy his brother, becauſe the found that his offering was accepted, that he had tokens of divine approbation. He was excited to ſlay him. The paſſion of envy excited him

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to ſhed human blood on the earth. With this Cain, this murderer, the Author of the univerſe deigns to expoſtulate in a very familiar manner: *Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doeſt well, ſhalt not thou be accepted? but, if thou doeſt not well, ſin lieth at the door*: ſo that, though, with reſpect to external profeſſion, and the external mode of offering their ſacrifices, they might be alike, yet, as the ſtate of the heart of one was wicked, and productive of wicked actions, he was not accepted with his gift at the ſacred altar; whereas, righteous Abel, who not only lifted up his hands to the habitation of God's holineſs, and conformed to the outward ſacrifice, but was juſtly impreſſed with a ſenſe of his duty, became the object of the divine complacency: becauſe *thou haſt loved righteouſneſs, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladneſs above thy fellows.* Though this, perhaps, may have a peculiar relation, as ſome have conſidered it, to the Meſſiah, yet it ſeems alſo to have a relation

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to a diſcrimination among creatures,—*becauſe thou haſt loved righteouſneſs*; therefore,—it is not in conſequence of a ſpecious profeſſion, not becauſe of an irrevocable decree,—but, *becauſe thou haſt loved righteouſneſs, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladneſs above thy fellows.* Oh! that there may be a proper emulation in us to excel in doing well. Ceaſe, therefore, to do evil, learn to do well. As doing evil was the means of bringing down judgements upon the people of the Jews, ſo they were inſtructed how to avert the divine wrath, and render themſelves acceptable to the Father of the univerſe; not by an attendance to the rituals of that diſpenſation,—*Bring no more vain oblations: incenſe is an abomination unto me*, ſaith the Lord: *your new moons and your appointed feaſts my ſoul hateth:*—but they were inſtructed what to do: *Waſh ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well; ſeek judgement; relieve the*

oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow. Here is a catalogue of excellent moral duties, here is an explanation of what it is to do well. *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Now,* ſays he, *come, and let us reaſon together: though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow: though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the good of the land.* Let us therefore conform ourſelves to the terms by which we are to be accepted. *Of a truth I perceive that God is no reſpecter of perſons; but, in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteouſneſs is accepted of him.* Let us therefore cheriſh in our breaſts, in the firſt inſtance, the emotions of filial fear, which is diſtinguiſhed from that ſlaviſh paſſion of which man is the object. Such a fear is evidently to be diſtinguiſhed from that affection we have to the Ancient of days. I compare that to the fear which an affection-

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ate child has of its parent, which ſprings from love; which, indeed, is the beſt and moſt worthy motive of our duties: we, therefore, fear not the Almighty Being merely becauſe he is armed with an uncontroulable power, and able to conſign us to eternal woe, who rides upon a cherub, and the clouds are the duſt of his feet, and doeth whatſoever he pleaſeth:—we fear him not only becauſe of the attributes of power, but of goodneſs, the adorable attributes of goodneſs, mercy, and truth. He has dealt with us not in a way of rigid juſtice, but according to the compaſſion of a father. He has bowed the heavens, and manifeſted himſelf among his creatures: for, he ſo loved the world, that he ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that whoſoever believeth in him might not periſh, but have everlaſting life; therefore, let him be the object of our fear; and of this fear many excellent things are ſpoken as to its effects by way of prevention. It is a fountain of life to preſerve from the ſnare of

death : the fear of the Lord keepeth the heart clean ; therefore, *bleſſed is the man that feareth always*. And, indeed, it is the firſt part of the everlaſting goſpel that was preached by an angel flying in the midſt of heaven, having the everlaſting goſpel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, ſaying, with a loud voice, *Fear God, and give glory to him ; for, the hour of his judgement is come ; and worſhip him that made heaven, and earth, and the ſea, and the fountains of waters : fear ye him !* This principle of filial fear will incline our ears to an attention to his law, and we ſhall be meditators therein day and night ; and ſhall not only be hearers of the word, but doers of it. Under the influence of this fear, we ſhall work the work of righteouſneſs, the fruit of which is peace and aſſurance for ever.

If we obſerve this rule of right, if we conform ourſelves to him, we ſhall be united to the Author of our being in an union that

that is indiſſoluble, and firm as the everlaſting hills. *Keep my commandments*, (ſays Chriſt to his diſciples,) *and abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.* Bleſſed is the man that keeps the commandments of God: he ſhall have acceſs to the tree of life, and enter through the gates into the city, become citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God. God grant, of his infinite mercy and goodneſs, that, when the days of our pilgrimage ſhall be ended, we may have an admiſſion into the aſſembly of juſt and pure ſpirits, to contemplate the attributes of the *I AM:* that we may ſing the ſong of Moſes, the ſervant of God, and the ſong of the lamb, ſaying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints!*

PRAYER

PRAYER

AT THE

CONCLUSION of the MEETING.

MOST gracious God, and Father of all, we beſeech thee, manifeſt thy preſence, that, impreſſed with the emotions of filial fear, we may approach thy holy altar with becoming reverence, pour forth our ſouls unto thee, and offer thee a ſacrifice of thankſgiving and praiſe: that the contemplation of thy name may impreſs our hearts with peculiar ſolemnity. Thou, who ſtandeſt in the adorable relation to us of a father,

ther, thy goodneſs hath been extended to us from ſeaſon to ſeaſon, from the firſt moment of our exiſtence to the preſent moment. It is of thy bounty that we are ſupplied with all thoſe bleſſings which we have received. Inſpire us, we beſeech thee, with the higheſt ſenſe of thy merciful goodneſs, that, O moſt gracious Father, though heaven be thy throne, and the earth be thy footſtool, continue, we beſeech thee, to look down upon us with favour, and regard the low eſtate of thy creatures. Sound an awakening alarm in the ears of the ignorant, thoſe who are reclined upon the beds of eaſe, who live in forgetfulneſs of thee, and of the obligations they are under to thee. O Grant that theſe may awake to righteouſneſs, that they ſin not; that, under an awful ſenſe of thy goodneſs, we may approach thy altar at this ſeaſon, and offer to thee thankſgiving and praiſe, aſcribing to thee glory, might, majeſty, and dominion, and every other excellent attribute and

perfection,

perfection, of which thou art worthy, not only now, but alſo henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

THE END.